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THE RIGHT PREPARES TO GO NUCLEAR

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Burt Neuborne

THE PRESS LOVED 'CURVEBALL,' TOO
Eric Alterman

THE NEW GEOPOLITICS OF OIL AND BASES
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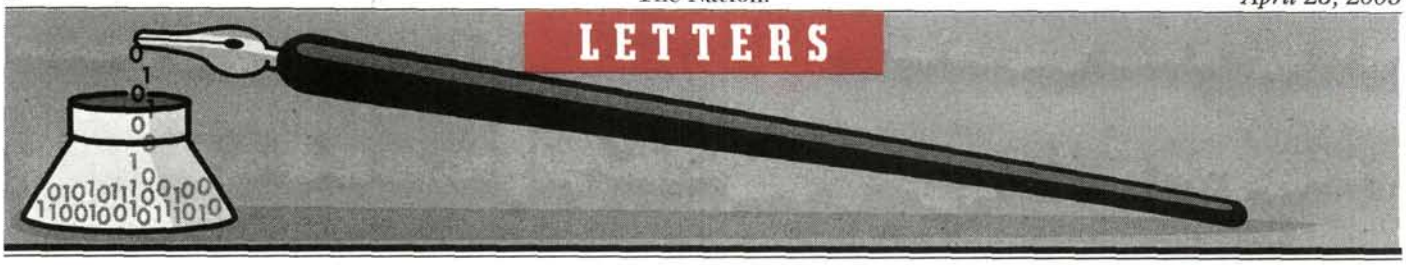

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

IRAQ: MADE IN AMERICA?

Pennington, NJ

■ Naomi Klein's March 28 "Lookout" column "Can Democracy Survive Bush's Embrace?" was insightful and prophetic. Karen Hughes will now serve as our propagandist in selling Brand USA to the world with emphasis on the Middle East. Is Klein planning a sequel: "Can *American* Democracy Survive Bush's Embrace?" NORM GOLDMAN

San Francisco

■ Naomi Klein understandably seeks to blame the Bush Administration for Iraqi woes, but she missed her mark when discussing Iraqi democracy. The Iraqi electoral system was not "designed" in Washington. In fact, its proportional representation system was designed by leading experts, many associated with the United Nations, who understand the importance of power-sharing. That plan was opposed by the Bush neocons who wanted the Iraqis to have an electoral system "just like ours," which would have meant carving up Iraq into single-seat, winner-take-all districts, creating disastrous turf wars. When Angola used a US-style winner-take-all system to settle its civil war, one side won nearly all the representation, so the other side resumed fighting. In Iraq, winner-take-all would have resulted in the United Iraqi Alliance, despite winning less than a majority of the popular vote, winning an overwhelming majority of seats, allowing it to ignore the Kurds and other ethnic minorities. Instead, with the proportional system, the Shiites must negotiate and share power, preventing a Shiite, possibly fundamentalist, stranglehold.

No, Iraq's proportional system is not "profoundly undemocratic," as Klein states. It's the best way for divided societies to make a transition to democracy, as the examples of Afghanistan, South Africa and former Soviet Eastern bloc nations show. A dose of it in the United States is strongly advisable. STEVEN HILL
New America Foundation

KLEIN REPLIES

Toronto

■ It's difficult to understand why Steven Hill would imply that the UN rather than the United States was the architect of Iraq's highly irregular and flawed electoral system. The UN's recommendations for when and how to form Iraq's first elected government were overruled at every stage, to which various UN workers have publicly testified (most vocally Salim Lone, who worked as a senior adviser in the UN mission in Baghdad before the 2003 bombing).

It's also shocking that Hill would describe the system in Iraq as "power-sharing." The US-designed model does not share power among all of Iraq's ethnic groups: It drastically augments the power of one group (the US-friendly Kurds) while diminishing the power of two other groups (the less-US-friendly Shiites and Sunnis). This is the direct result of three decisions, all made by Washington in its own interest. The first was to treat all of Iraq as a single electoral constituency, with no seats set aside by region. That meant that seats went to whichever group managed to turn out the greatest number of people, regardless of where they lived. The second decision was to brutally attack Falluja and other Sunni cities in the months leading up to the elections, guaranteeing that a majority of Sunnis would either boycott the elections in protest or be physically unable to cast ballots because they were exiled from their homes. Because of the lack of regional representation, when Sunnis didn't turn out to vote, their seats simply went to the Kurds, who turned out in droves. (It's as if low voter turnout in California meant that all the state's seats went to Texas.)

The third was to require that all major decisions of Iraq's National Assembly—including the formation of the government itself—be made by a two-thirds "super majority," rather than by a simple majority. This gives the Kurds, with their inflated number of seats, a virtual veto over Iraq's democracy. This is hardly standard post-conflict power-sharing, as Hill claims. In fact, as Iraq expert Juan Cole recently commented, "I wouldn't be surprised if the two-thirds supermajority is characteristic of only one nation on earth, i.e., American Iraq. I fear it is functioning in an antidemocratic manner to thwart the will of the majority of Iraqis, who braved great danger to come out and vote." NAOMI KLEIN

GATES: GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

New York City

■ Roberta Brandes Gratz and Stephen A. Goldsmith view Christo/Jeanne-Claude's The Gates through saffron-colored glasses ["In the Park With Christo," March 28]. They celebrate Central Park as "dynamic public space" while ignoring its semi-privatization under the Central Park Conservancy (CPC). They celebrate Christo and Jeanne-Claude's generosity without a hint of skepticism about their supposed $21 million "gift to New York," and without a hint of awareness of the conflicts of interest involved.

The authors contrast Central Park with the spread of "privatized space…like kudzu across the land," including malls where "public assembly…can be legally denied." But that's precisely what happened when the city and CPC prevented the August 29 antiwar march from going to Central Park. The CPC, a combine of mega-corporations, invites some public events and bars others. Surely, this is something to challenge, not celebrate.

In addition, Christo was grinding out Gates drawings that sold individually for $600,000 and by one estimate $1 million. Among the purchasers were the CPC and Mayor Bloomberg (who collected Christos, which would skyrocket in value), whose promotion of The Gates enhanced the value of their investments. This is big business. The European Fine Art Fair opened in Maastricht less than a week after The Gates closed. Three of Christo's earlier works sold there for more than $1 million, his dealer attributing this to The Gates.

The authors largely pass over aesthetic questions, leaving the display to stand or fall as "populist spectacle" and Great Communal Event. The Gates, and the puffery around them, are faux populism, a poor case on which to hang an argument for art for the people.

(By the way, as anyone with eyes to see through the fiction knows, The Gates were orange. And why did the authors erase Jeanne-Claude?) JESSE LEMISCH

Brooklyn, NY

■ Gratz and Goldsmith make a common error in ascribing the lion's share of praise for Central Park's "brilliant reshaping of the landscape" to the work and vision of Frederick Law Olmsted. The original pastoral landscape was Calvert Vaux's conception. Olmsted joined him later. And Vaux was the true democrat of the two—the one who viewed Central Park as a grand experiment in developing a more communal and egalitarian city where people of many different classes and cultures could mingle and mix. Olmsted had a far more ambivalent attitude toward "the public," frequently voicing concerns about "common elements" trampling his park.

Olmsted's political acumen and long-range planning skills made the park possible, but Vaux's legacy is conceiving the dynamic public space that Gratz and Goldsmith so correctly affirm. JOHN S. BERMAN
Author, Central Park

New York City

■ Gratz and Goldsmith, writing of the "inspired design of Central Park," fail to mention the displacement of the community of German and Irish immigrants and African-Americans who lived peacefully in Seneca Village from 1825 through 1857. A thriving but powerless community was sacrificed by the whims of the politically connected. A plaque at 85th Street and Central Park West commemorates this village. JACQUIE HUGHES

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EDITORIALS

Legislative Bomb

Seventy-four percent of Americans surveyed by CBS News said Congress intervened in the Terri Schiavo right-to-die case to advance a political agenda, not because they cared what happened to the Florida woman whose last days took center ring in a grotesque national media circus. The people called it accurately, as right-wingers on Capitol Hill confirmed with incendiary reactions to Schiavo's death. "The time will come for the men responsible for this to answer for their behavior," snarled House majority leader Tom DeLay; GOP Senator John Cornyn wondered aloud on the Senate floor whether there was a connection between the "perception" that judges are making political decisions and the fact that "some people...engage in violence." Both DeLay and Cornyn took some appropriate hits for playing to the worst instincts of a country where in recent months judges and their families have been the targets of violence. But few in Washington were confused about the meaning of DeLay's warning: While he might muse about impeaching federal jurists, his real passion is for removing barriers to the Bush Administration's campaign to pack the courts with right-wing judicial activists.

DeLay has made no secret of his desire to "go nuclear" in the fight over judicial nominations, and Senate majority leader Bill Frist, another Schiavo interventionist, shares his enthusiasm for blowing up the rules that allow a minority of senators to use a filibuster—best understood as the unlimited extension of debate—to block controversial judicial nominations. During Bush's first term, when the Senate flipped back and forth between Republican and Democratic control, Democrats managed to derail ten of the Administration's 229 nominees for federal judgeships—in Judiciary Committee votes when the Democrats controlled the committee and later, when Republicans took charge, with filibusters. Among those blocked were Bush's most extreme picks for federal appeals court benches in the West and South, such as California Supreme Court Justice Janice Brown, who argues that the First Amendment permits corporations to make false or misleading representations without legal ramifications, and Texas Supreme Court Justice Priscilla Owen, whose moves to undermine protections for women seeking abortions were so radical that another justice, right-winger Alberto Gonzales (now US Attorney General), decried them as an "unconscionable act of judicial activism."

With Republicans more firmly in control of the Senate after the 2004 elections, Bush has resubmitted the names of Brown, Owen and five more blocked nominees. Even with the Senate split fifty-five to forty-five, Democrats still have the forty votes needed to maintain a filibuster. But Republican leaders in the Senate, including Frist, are so determined to satisfy the Administration and their party's social conservative base that they have signaled their willingness to invoke the "nuclear option" of radically rewriting the Senate's rules to make filibusters of judicial nominees virtually impossible. So the fight is on, not just to save a Senate rule but to maintain this country's already compromised system of checks and balances on executive and legislative overreach.

The filibuster takes its name from the Dutch word for "pirate," and it has long been associated with a buccaneering approach to the legislative process. Dissident minority senators have historically tossed the final roadblock of the filibuster in the way of nominations or laws they could not prevent in any other manner. As with most tools, the filibuster can be used for good or ill. For every Paul Wellstone filibustering to block a corrupt bankruptcy "reform," there was a Strom Thurmond filibustering to slow the civil rights movement. Unlimited debate was allowed until 1917, when President Wilson, worried about the prospect of antiwar senators like Robert La Follette using the filibuster to challenge his rush to enter World War I, prevailed upon the Senate to adopt a rule allowing two-thirds of senators to vote to end a filibuster. In 1975 the ratio was modified to three-fifths, or sixty votes, where it has remained. But there has rarely been serious discussion about eliminating the filibuster until now.

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If the nuclear option is invoked, Congress will become an altered branch of government. In the absence of rules that require the consideration of minority views and values, the Senate will become little different from the House, where the party out of power is reduced almost to observer status. That's why Robert Byrd, dean of the Senate and the most ardent champion of the chamber's rules, called the nuclear option "a legislative bomb that threatens the rights to dissent, to unlimited debate and to freedom of speech."

The nuclear option could take a variety of forms. Under the most likely scenario, Vice President Cheney, president of the Senate, would rule that filibusters against judicial nominees are unconstitutional. If a bare majority of the Senate upheld the move, such filibusters would for all practical purposes be eliminated, and only fifty-one votes would be needed to approve a nominee. Democrats would effectively lose their last tool for blocking Bush choices not just for the lower courts but also for the Supreme Court seats that are all but certain to open before his term ends.

If the filibuster survives in its current form, Democrats will be credited with a significant legislative victory—keeping the process open for the Supreme Court nomination fights, during which the GOP would have a hard time changing the rules. But there aren't enough Democratic senators to prevent Frist & Co. from going nuclear. The "no nukes" camp must be expanded to include at least a handful of Republicans. It makes sense to begin with the GOP's dwindling circle of moderates: Maine's Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe, Rhode Island's Lincoln Chafee, Pennsylvania's Arlen Specter, Indiana's Richard Lugar. If ever there was a time when thinking Republicans needed to separate themselves from their party's jihadist wing, this is it. But it makes just as much sense to pressure conscientious conservatives. Already two former GOP senators with pristine conservative pedigrees, James McClure of Idaho and Malcolm Wallop of Wyoming, have argued in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed that going the nuclear route could mean the end of the Senate as "a continuing body with continuing rules."

While Frist and his allies claim they only want to change the rules for consideration of judicial nominations, McClure and Wallop argue that "it is naïve to think that what is done to the judicial filibuster will not later be done to its legislative counterpart." They add, "Without the possibility of a filibuster, a future majority leader could bring up objectionable international commitments with only an hour or two for debate, hardly enough time for opponents to inform the public and rally the citizenry against ratification."

The abuses that McClure and Wallop fear ought not to be the concern merely of Democrats and retired Republican senators; current GOP senators who presume to speak for more than the narrowest and most partisan wing of their party—people like Arizona Senator John McCain—have a responsibility to speak up. That is most likely to happen if they hear a loud call along the following lines from their constituents: This is not an issue of Republican versus Democrat, nor even liberal versus conservative; this is a moment when we decide whether this country will remain a democracy in which those who govern must play by the rules, or will become a winner-take-all system where the gravest fear of the founders—tyranny of the majority—will be the lasting legacy of George W. Bush, Tom DeLay and Bill Frist.

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COMMENT

An Ambiguous Papacy

Pope John Paul II knew, above all, how to seize the historical moment—particularly if it was televised. He condemned exploitation and tyranny, hatred and violence, capitalist globalization, imperialist war and the death penalty. After instructing the Polish Stalinists that workers were not "means of production," he told post-Communist Eastern Europe that Marxism contained a "kernel of truth" in its refusal to make everything in life a commodity. He opposed both wars in Iraq and supported the United Nations, not the American Empire. He insisted on the moral responsibility of the rich Northern Hemisphere to the poorer Southern one and on decent treatment of Third World immigrants to Europe. He apologized for the Roman Catholic Church's terrible past—for the Crusades, the Inquisition, anti-Semitism. He opened dialogue with Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam.

At the same time, however, he lived a step from the Sistine Chapel, with Michelangelo's depiction of the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, and had a sense of sin that constantly threatened his doctrines of hope. He was an inflexible traditionalist in denying equality to women in church and society. He regarded homosexuals as sinners and so legitimized the most primitive of hatreds. These are not just matters of dogma. The Vatican's opposition to birth control programs contributes to the poverty of the Third World; its refusal to accept the use of condoms likely facilitated the spread of AIDS; its coalitions with Islamists in international bodies reinforced their capacity to deny rights to women.

Argument and experiment within the church, so creative under John XXIII, gave way to a personalized party line. The great alternative tradition of Catholicism, conciliar church government with the participation of the governed, was consigned to the history books. Theologian Father Hans Küng declared the papacy of John Paul II a monarchical nightmare. Often, the most engaged groups of the Catholic laity had to struggle with their own church for the right to carry its social doctrines into the public arena. The fate of the liberation theology movement is a striking example: In a continent desperate for justice, it was pronounced heretical—setting back reform of Latin American society a generation.

Italian journalist Enzo Biagi has said that the Pope was the most famous man in the world—and the least listened to. Heads of government outdid themselves in praising the Pope's "moral vision"—then promptly returned to their compromises and crimes. The European Christian social parties have recently put their energies into an entirely symbolic campaign to write into the European constitution an affirmation of Europe's "Christian identity"—or into supporting anti-Muslim campaigns. In Italy itself, the Vatican and bishops have allied themselves with Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, a figure who hardly reminds us of Saint Francis.

The case of American Catholicism is especially disappointing. Our great social achievement, the development of an American welfare state, owes much to Catholic thinkers and organizations. Without a Catholic moral presence, the United States might have experienced a self-righteous Protestantism run amok. Matters are now bad enough, but those who are horrified by the idea of our nation as a gigantic market can draw inspiration as well as consolation from the periods when Catholics championed social reform. The late Pope must have had this in mind when he told Americans that there were none so rich that they could ignore the contribution of the poor, and none so poor that they had nothing to give to the nation. Nevertheless, the American Catholic Church—despite the Pope's opposition to the Iraq War, the Bush doctrines of global domination, and the sovereignty of the market—contributed to the defeat of John Kerry. Prominent cardinals and bishops instructed Catholics not to vote for him because of his views on the rights of homosexuals and women.The Pope as indefatigable moral pilgrim, as multilingual preacher, was an impressive performance artist. With the Popemobile once again parked in the Vatican garage, however, much of the church reverted to complicity with power and wealth—or to its pathological obsession with sexuality.

(Continued on Page 23)

CALVIN TRILLIN

'Curveball,' the Wacko Who Turned Out to Be Our Only Source for the Presence of Bioweapon Vans in Iraq, Is Sung His Instructions to the Tune Of That Old Favorite, 'Hambone'

Curveball, Curveball, what they lack
Are excuses to attack.
Your assignment's crystal clear:
Tell them what they yearn to hear.
Curveball!

Curveball, Curveball, worry not
That baloney's all you've got,
Or that you're a boozy wreck.
Tenet doesn't care to check.
Curveball!

Curveball, Curveball, they don't mind
That there's nothing there to find.
Just concoct some bio scare.
Wolfowitz will go from there.
If they didn't know your game,
Why'd they give you such a name?
Curveball!

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JONATHAN SCHELL

Faking Civil Society

Perhaps the most beautiful achievement of political life in the late twentieth century was the international movement for democracy that brought down several dozen dictatorships of every possible description—authoritarian, communist, fascist, military. It happened on all continents, and it happened peacefully. It began in the 1970s, with the collapse of the Greek junta and of the right-wing regimes in Portugal and Spain; it continued in the 1980s, mysteriously jumping the Atlantic, with the collapse of dictatorships in Argentina, Chile and Brazil; then, vaulting the Pacific, it claimed the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines. Finally, in the early '90s, it spread to South Africa, where the white apartheid regime yielded to majority rule, and returned to the Eurasian continent, where the great Soviet empire itself shuffled off history's stage.

The actors in this benign contagion acquired a name: civil society. "Civil": they were peaceful, meaning that the bomb in the cafe, the assassination of the local official, the paratrooper invasion of the Parliament building were not their tactics. "Society": they expressed popular will, not the will of governments. The movement broke or made governments. It was their master.

Recently, however, the movement has undergone a change both at home and abroad. Civil society groups in the more prosperous societies began to lend welcome assistance to poorer ones. But governments also joined in. Unlike private civil groups, governments are in their nature interested in power, and the civil society movements clearly exercised it. Here in America, the National Endowment for Democracy was created in the early 1980s. Funded by Congress and governed by a board that included active and retired politicians of both parties, it nevertheless called itself a "nongovernmental" organization. Its declared mission was to support democracy per se, not any political party; but the distinction was soon lost in practice. Most of the $10.5 million handed out in Nicaragua during the elections of 1990 went to the opposition to the Sandinistas, who were duly voted out of power. In 2002 the Endowment funded groups in Venezuela that backed the briefly successful coup against President Hugo Chávez, in which the Venezuelan Parliament, judiciary and constitution were suspended.

The day after the overthrow, which Omar Encarnación of Bard College has called a "civil society coup," the president of the International Republican Institute, which is loosely tied to the GOP and is a conduit for Endowment funds, stated, "Last night, led by every sector of civil society, the Venezuelan people rose up to defend democracy in their country." Speaking for the US government, the presidential press secretary, Ari Fleischer, stated that the coup "happened in a very quick fashion as a result of the message of the Venezuelan people." In fact, the Venezuelan people opposed the coup, and Chávez, notwithstanding his own repressive tendencies, almost immediately returned to power.

More recently Endowment contributions went to groups in Ukraine that supported presidential candidate Viktor Yushchenko, who became president after fraudulent results engineered by the government candidate were reversed by popular pressure. In Venezuela, the outcome was the destruction, however brief, of all democratic institutions, whereas in Ukraine the outcome was the rescue of democracy; yet in both cases the integrity of civil society, which depends on independence from governments, was partially corrupted.

Something similar was meanwhile happening within the United States. The Republican Party and its supporters have been the pioneers, creating what might be called a shadow civil society and seeking to merge it imperceptibly with the real one. Former New Jersey Senator Bill Bradley summarized the process in a March 30 op-ed in the *New York Times*: Large donors founded partisan think tanks more interested in propagandizing than in thinking; then proceeded to establish seemingly independent but actually politically subservient news organizations such as Fox News and the Rush Limbaugh show. Recently, some new wrinkles in the process have emerged: the use of fake newscasters, pretending to report from an independent news station while actually working for a department of government, and fake reporters, such as "Jeff Gannon," the imposter permitted by the White House to ask sycophantic questions of the President at White House press conferences. There is also the fake "town meeting" (the very emblem of civil society) with the President, at which a screened audience asks pretested questions.

The strategy of faking civil activity has a long tradition in the foreign sphere. For example, the CIA virtually cut its teeth manipulating popular and intellectual movements in Europe in the late 1940s and '50s. (Indeed, historian Allen Weinstein, who was the Endowment's first acting president, has commented, "A lot of what we do today was done covertly twenty-five years ago by the CIA.") But the domestic practice is more recent. One of the lesser-known points of origin is the presidency of Richard Nixon, who once ordered his aide Charles Colson to firebomb the Brookings Institution then called it off. But he also had some more workable ideas. He told Patrick Buchanan, then his communications director, that he wanted somehow not only to cut off existing "left-wing" foundations "without a dime" but also to found a right-wing institute that would seem to be independent but would actually be managed by the White House. As Buchanan commented in a memo, "some of the essential objectives of the Institute would have to be blurred, even buried, in all sorts of other activity that would be the bulk of its work, that would employ many people, and that would provide the cover for the more important efforts." In this matter, as in so many others, today's Republican Party is the legatee of Richard Nixon.

Some Democrats want their party to respond in kind. For urgent and understandable reasons, they want to level the playing field. But the cost could be high. In such a world, nothing would be what it seemed. Behind every blogger would lurk the PR spinmeister, behind every reporter would stand the political hack, behind every charming demonstrator holding her banner—rose, orange, purple or cedar—would lie the cold hand of the state. In the name of civil society, civil society would be spoiled.

Jonathan Schell is The Nation Institute's Harold Willens Peace Fellow.

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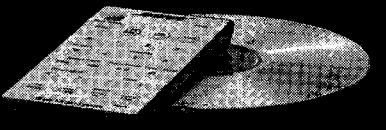

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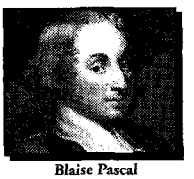
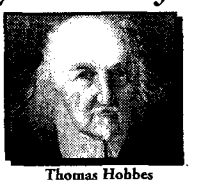
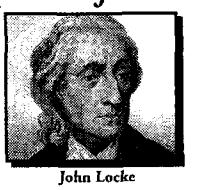
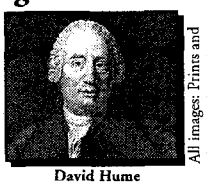

Blaise Pascal


Thomas Hobbes


John Locke


David Hume

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As an educated person, you're aware that many of the basic concepts shaping our world are barely 200 years old. Modern science, technology, democratic government, natural rights, and even a general tendency to be open to innovation are a few examples. Our society and culture take them as givens, even while we continue to debate their meanings and implications.

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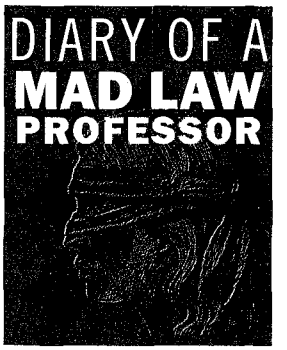
PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS

Moral Postman



Recently the Colorado Supreme Court overturned the death sentence of a convicted murderer because jurors had consulted a Bible during their deliberations and had argued chapter and verse in choosing life or death for the defendant. After grazing through Romans and Leviticus, they settled upon the passage about "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," and voted unanimously for execution. Citing concern that the jurors appear to have turned to "higher" authority rather than the law of the state, the Colorado Supreme Court's decision was a wise one, recognizing the threat posed by the insertion of biblical passages in the interpretation of laws passed by men in a representative democracy. But the problem is likely to continue to be a thorny one. Colorado, as it turns out, has an unusually directive yet amorphous set of jury instructions, one of which explicitly exhorts jurors to consult a "moral compass" in capital felony cases. It's an interesting reference in these times, when we slap the word "morality" on everything from individual opinion to ethical guidelines to constitutional principles to religious imperative.

The very purpose of the jury system in common law is to bring community norms to the process of adjudication, whether the wisdom of "peers" (literally the peerage in earlier English history) or the "common sense" of the ordinary citizen or the "reasonable doubt" of the reasonable person. This implies some process by which jurors determine an accused's fate by, first, evaluating what did or didn't happen through the filter of their own ability to connect the dots, their sense of witness credibility and their empathy; and, second, measuring these factual conclusions against a given set of rules we as citizens agree to honor as the law. Colorado's appeal to jurors' morals is, I should think, an underscoring of the normativity inherent in the open-minded, communally reasoned deliberation that is essential to part one of their role. When it comes to the second part, however, the law, as instructed by the court, must be the compass, the yardstick, the rule. It is not what your mother taught you or what your boss instructed or even what you think God commanded.

Our court system was designed to moderate human behavior in the face of moral ambiguity and in the absence of specific bullhorned answers from God. Laws against murder, of course, reflect religious commandments not to kill. But what happens when someone runs a red light and kills a math prodigy? When someone kills an intruder attempting to harm a child? When a convicted strangler asks the state, with a tortured little smile of anticipatory pleasure, to execute him by strangulation, pretty please? We could have the city council throw knucklebones, or have our tribal elders engage in haruspication; but as a society we've come up with our own time-tested system of civic rituals, of procedures and presumptions—the legal process that is due to each of us. Our laws are passed by the men and women we charge to instantiate our morality as best they can, Tom DeLay notwithstanding. Jury instructions are like traffic cones for those laws, signaling the way toward consistency and consensus, balancing the power of the state against those whose liberty is subject to it.

Let me shift the frame a bit. There is, of late, a movement among some health professionals, including doctors, pharmacists and insurers, to exercise so-called "right of refusal." A pharmacist, for example, will decide that as a matter of personal conscience he will not issue drugs of whose use he disapproves. In practice this refusal seems largely informed by religious conservatism, and thus the refusal seems to crop up almost exclusively in the context of drugs affecting women's reproduction. Some pharmacists have refused to sell contraceptives to any but married women. Unmarried women have been lectured on the sins of premarital fornication. Some pharmacists have refused to issue the morning-after pill or other abortifacients, calling it baby-killing. The variations have been endless, as varied as the personal tastes of the health providers themselves. At least twelve states have passed laws allowing medical professionals to refuse to dispense medicine or care on general "moral" grounds.

It is an interesting development, this opt-out based on personal belief. While the boundary between personal and professional judgment is not always easy or clear, if indeed pharmacists put their own beliefs before the guidelines of the profession by which they are licensed, they ought to have to accept that they have, in effect, chosen not to be pharmacists. As in the example of the jury room, these new "refusal clause" laws put privatized moral interests in direct contention with the public interest. They may permit professional ethics to be replaced by religious or paternalistic belief. And although done in the name of choice or moral integrity, it certainly appears to have more to do with the right's longed-for disintegration of "secular humanist" society. The refusal to go along with anything with which you disagree may indeed be a principled individual choice, but it should not be allowed legally to displace collectively reviewed scientific findings, or to substitute for the codes of behavior we demand as a condition of handing out professional licenses. To the extent that that happens, we open the door not just to random disruption in healthcare but a sidelining of the already embedded moralism of our social compact.

It's true that we live in a moment when the notion of a moral compass is so politically vexed that it ought to be depicted with its little needle spinning like a pinwheel in a good stiff breeze. One can rather too easily imagine jurors spinning that compass a bit like the wheel of fortune: Round and round one's destiny goes, where she lands, nobody knows. The Ten Commandments? The law as laid down by that guy on *Oprah*? Sermon on the Mount? Madonna quoting the Kabbalah? *Aaaand* it's Leviticus! Down the chute you go! The dangers of such a model were more foregrounded in our public discussion only a few years back; no longer, I suppose. But it is, after all, the commitment to a civil bond over time that keeps us tolerant, distinguishes us as citizens and commits us to justice rather than vengeance, to consistency rather than short-term outcome, to the greater good rather than the exclusivity of individualized whim. ■

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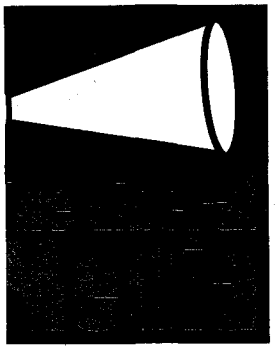
ERIC ALTERMAN

'Case Closed'



Were it not for the tens of thousands of dead and wounded, the billions wasted, and the hatred and terrorism inspired, the report *The Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction* would be almost funny. After all, did we really need a $10 million, fourteen-month, 600-plus-page investigation to tell us that the country was taken to war on the basis of a nonexistent threat? What might have been helpful would have been a genuine accounting of how the system was gamed in order to produce phony arguments and suppress the counterevidence. After all, for all his hurt feelings on display before the report was released, does anyone think Colin Powell would have given radically different testimony to the world at his famous February 2003 UN speech if the single drunken defector who was his main source had offered another perspective, one Powell and his bosses didn't want to hear? What if "Curveball" (or as Maureen Dowd aptly termed him, "Goofball") had echoed what Powell originally knew but conveniently forgot—that, as the Secretary explained in Cairo in February 2001, Saddam Hussein "has not developed any significant capability with respect to weapons of mass destruction. He is unable to project conventional power against his neighbors." Would anyone in the Administration have cared what this unreliable drunk said? What of the many, many intelligence experts who warned, pre-invasion, that the data were being manipulated by hawks in the Pentagon and the Vice President's office? Did anyone listen to them?

Bush says today that he would have invaded Iraq even if he knew then what he knows today. This investigation is therefore a farce—designed once again to shift responsibility from the people who demanded corrupt intelligence to serve their ideological obsessions to those who were forced to provide it.

Our political process has become so degraded that the commissioners themselves can admit that they were forbidden from examining the one issue that still matters. As commission co-chair Laurence Silberman explained, "Our executive order did not direct us to deal with the use of intelligence by policy makers, and all of us were agreed that was not part of our inquiry." The *New York Times*'s Todd Purdum noted a passage of the report in which its authors come close to admitting that the problem was not with the providers of intelligence but with the consumers: They complain that the President's Daily Brief was understood to require "attention-grabbing headlines" and that a "drumbeat of repetition," says Purdum, quoting the report, "left misleading impressions, and no room for shadings. 'In ways both subtle and not so subtle, the daily reports seemed to be "selling" intelligence,' the commission found, 'in order to keep its customers, or at least the First Customer, interested.'"

This passage reinforces two important lessons about contemporary uses of US intelligence. One: The First Customer requires his information to be provided to him with "no room for shadings" as they may exist in, say, the real world. And two: In order to get Bush to pay attention, the intelligence had to be cooked up to agree with his beliefs. Given this, we might as well ditch our entire intelligence system, because unless it simply regurgitates the President's pre-existing prejudices, the information it contains will be ignored, rewritten or both.

Much of the coverage of the report—which was, perhaps via divine intervention, drowned out by the deaths of Terri Schiavo and Pope John Paul II—gesticulated in the direction of this fundamental truth before returning to the agreed-upon story line that Bush was very, very angry about the fact that he received bad intelligence that led him to invade a country that presented no threat whatever and made him out to be a liar to the rest of the world. He was so mad, in fact, that the only person deemed to be responsible for this massive failure, former CIA director George Tenet, was given the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor. (Everybody else involved was punished with a promotion and a raise.)

Yet even in the most critical reports of this phony whitewash, one aspect of this shameful episode went by largely forgotten: the media's willingness to publicize, vouch for and frequently hype the dishonest case the Administration put forth. I am not speaking just of Judith Miller's willingness to act as unpaid propagandist for the Pentagon, breaking the *Times*'s own reporting rules on its front page in order to mislead its millions of readers. Rather, just about every bigfoot in the business signed on for this bad-acid trip across Bushland. I refer again to a devastating study by *Des Moines Register* former editorial page editor Gilbert Cranberg of the immediate reaction of the press to Powell's channeling of Goofball at the United Nations, which should serve as a cautionary example to any reporter who ever again takes this Administration at its word. Despite the fact that Powell cited almost no verifiable sources and included more than forty vague references to "human sources," "an eyewitness," "detainees," "an Al Qaeda source," "a senior defector," "intelligence sources," his words were treated as if the reporters present had personally witnessed God handing him the evidence on tablets atop Mount Sinai. Powell offered up, we were told in our finest newspapers: "a massive array of evidence," "a sober, factual case," "an overwhelming case," "a smoking fusillade…a persuasive case for anyone who is still persuadable," "an accumulation of painstakingly gathered and analyzed evidence," "an ironclad case…incontrovertible evidence," "succinct and damning evidence…the case is closed."

And yes, this is the same press attacked by Bush supporters as too liberal, too cynical and too "elitist" to give a Republican conservative a fair shake. In a more just universe, the right-wingers would stop whining and give reporters the credit they so richly earned. I mean if the guy in charge of providing all this crappy intelligence deserves a Presidential Medal of Freedom, don't the people who parroted it back deserve a little lovin' too? ■

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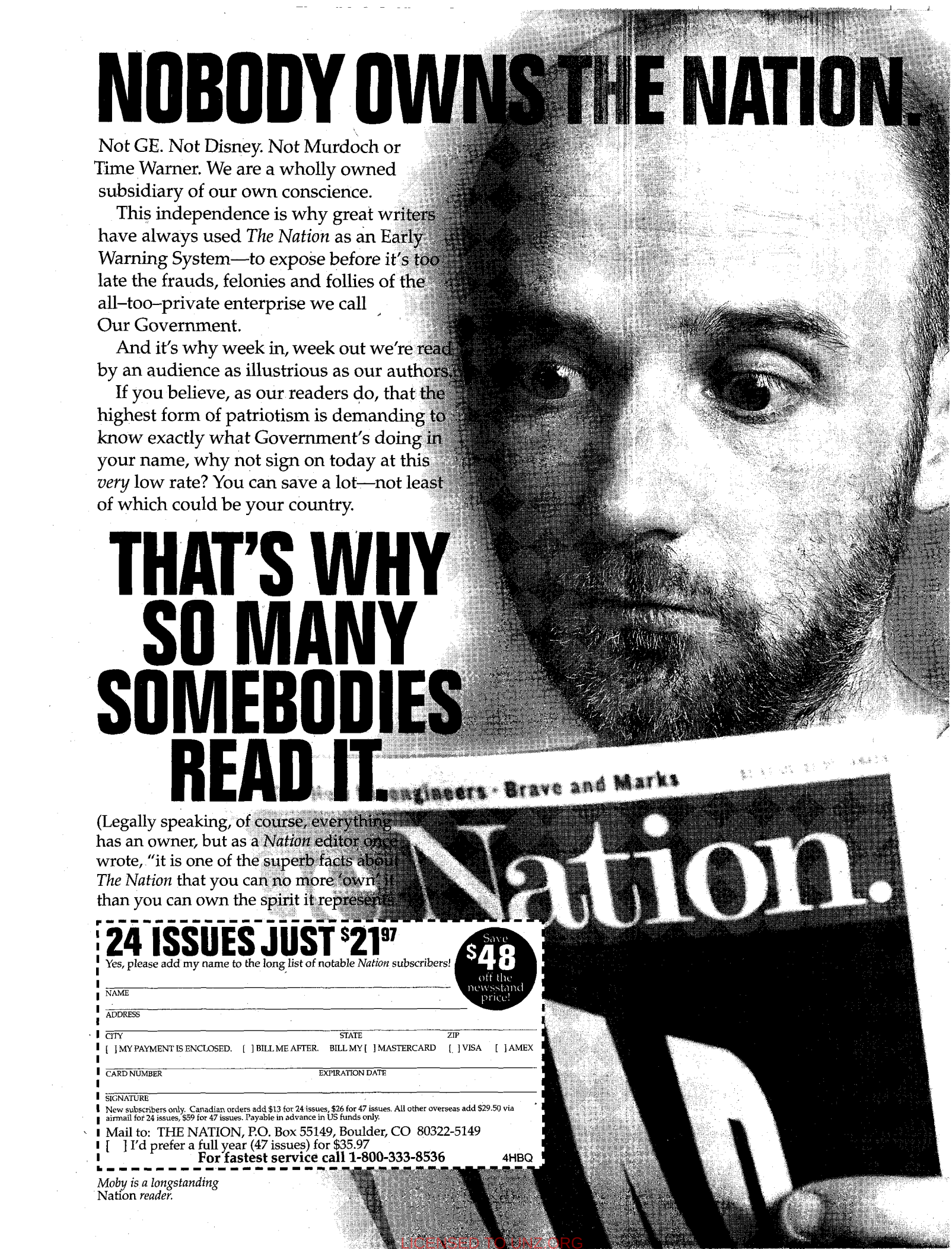

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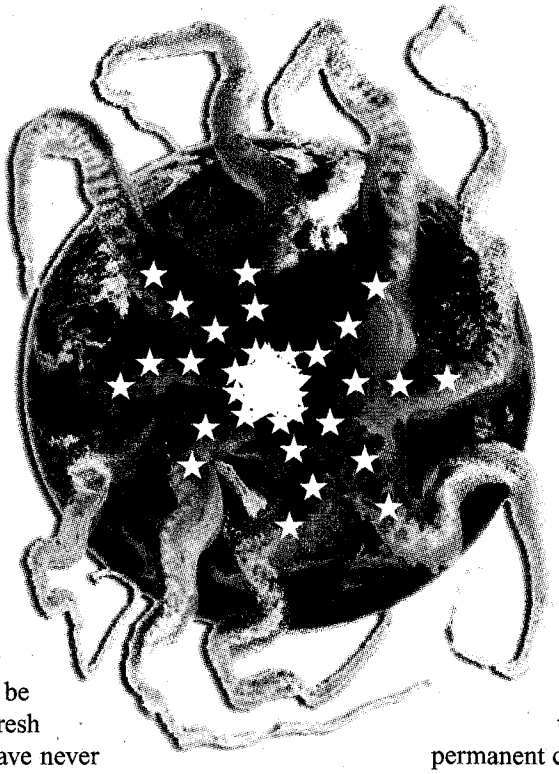
THE PENTAGON'S NEW BASING STRATEGY

MICHAEL T. KLARE



As the Defense Department begins to look beyond the war in Iraq, a major priority will be to commence a systematic realignment of US forces and bases abroad. This massive undertaking will result in a substantial reduction of American forces in Germany and South Korea, and the establishment of new facilities in Eastern Europe, the Caspian Sea basin, Southeast Asia and Africa. Tens of thousands of troops (and their dependents) now stationed abroad will be redeployed to the United States, while fresh contingents will be sent to areas that have never before housed a permanent US military presence. These steps are largely justified in terms of military effectiveness—to eliminate obsolete cold war facilities and ease the transport of American troops to likely scenes of conflict. Underlying the planning, however, is a new approach to combat and a fresh calculus of the nation's geopolitical interests.

The first big steps in the Pentagon's basing realignment were announced last summer by President Bush during a speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Cincinnati. Up to 70,000 American combat troops will be redeployed from bases in Germany, Japan and South Korea to bases in the United States or to US territories abroad, including Guam. Most of these forces—approximately 40,000 troops from the First Armored Division and the First Infantry Division—will be withdrawn from Germany. At the same time, however, the Army will station one of its Stryker Brigades, built around the Stryker light armored vehicle, at the Grafenwöhr training area in what used to be East Germany. Bush also indicated that new basing facilities will be acquired in other countries, in order to facilitate the rapid movement of American troops to likely areas of combat. "We'll move some of our troops and capabilities to new locations," Bush explained, "so they can surge quickly to deal with unexpected threats."

In conjunction with this announcement, the Defense Department disclosed that it is looking at two new types of basing facilities in areas that at present do not house permanent US military installations. The first type, designated "forward operating sites" or "forward operating locations," will consist of logistical facilities (an airstrip or port complex) plus weapons stockpiles; these installations will house a small permanent crew of US military technicians but no large combat units. The second type, termed "cooperative security locations," will be "bare bones" facilities utilized at times of crisis only; such sites will have no permanent US presence but will be maintained by military contractors and host-country personnel.

In discussing these new facilities, the Defense Department has gone out of its way to avoid using the term "military base." A base, in the Pentagon's lexicon, is a major facility with permanent barracks, armories, recreation facilities, housing for dependents and so on. Such installations typically have been in place for many years and are sanctioned by a formal security partnership with the host country involved. The new types of facilities, on the other hand, will contain no amenities, house no dependents and not be tied to a formal security arrangement. This distinction is necessary, the Pentagon explains, to avoid giving the impression that the United States is seeking a permanent, colonial-like presence in the countries it views as possible hosts for such installations.

"We have no plans [for military bases] on a permanent basis in those areas," Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld averred when speaking of Eastern Europe and the Caspian Sea region. "We're

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trying to find the right phraseology. We know the word 'base' is not right for what we do.... We have bases in Germany and we will continue to. But we also have had things that we call 'Forward Operating Locations' or sites that are not permanent bases: they're not places where you have families; they are not places where you have large numbers of US military on a permanent basis.... [They are places] where you'd locate people in and out or where you use it for refueling—these types of things."

The Defense Department has not publicly stated where it will establish these new, no-frills installations, but Pentagon officials have inspected possible locations in Eastern Europe, the Caspian Sea basin and Africa. Additional sites have been mentioned in Congressional reports and news media. It is possible, then, to identify many of the most likely sites [see sidebar, page 16].

President Jimmy Carter started a trend when he vowed in 1980 to protect Persian Gulf oil 'by any means necessary, including military force.'

The decommissioning of older bases in Germany, Japan and South Korea and the acquisition of new facilities in other areas has been described by the White House as "the most comprehensive restructuring of US military forces overseas since the end of the Korean War." In explaining these moves, the Bush Administration emphasizes the issue of utility: Many older installations eat up vast resources but contribute little to overall combat effectiveness, and so should be closed; at the same time, new facilities are needed in areas where few American bases currently exist. But while it is certainly arguable that the closing of obsolete bases in Europe and East Asia will free resources that might be better employed somewhere else, it is also clear that a lot more is going on than mere military utility. Indeed, a close look at Pentagon statements and policy reports suggests that three other factors are at work: a new calculus of America's geopolitical interests; a shift in US strategic orientation from defensive to offensive operations; and concerns about the future reliability of long-term allies, especially those in "Old Europe."

Most significant, overall, is the revised calculation of America's geopolitical interests. During the cold war, when "containment" was the overarching strategic principle, the United States surrounded the Soviet bloc with major bases. With the end of the cold war, however, this template no longer made sense, and many of these bases lost their strategic rationale. Meanwhile, other concerns—terrorism, the pursuit of foreign oil and the rise of China—have come to preoccupy American strategists. It is these concerns that are largely driving the realignment of US bases and forces.

There is a remarkable degree of convergence among these concerns, both in practical and geographic terms. Oil and terrorism are linked because many of the most potent terrorist groups, including Al Qaeda, arose in part as a reaction to the West's oil-inspired embrace of entrenched Arab governments, and because the terrorists often attack oil facilities in order to weaken the regimes they abhor. Similarly, oil and China are linked because both Washington and Beijing seek influence in the major oil-producing regions. And the major terrorist groups, the most promising sites of new oil and the focal points of Sino-American energy competition are all located in the same general neighborhoods: Central Asia and the Caspian region, the greater Gulf area and the far reaches of the Sahara. And the United States is establishing new basing facilities precisely in these areas.

In combating the threat posed by terrorist forces, the United States naturally seeks an enhanced military presence where these groups first arose. Moreover, as the older oilfields of the North are gradually exhausted, more and more of the world's oil will have to come from producers in the Global South—especially the Persian Gulf countries plus Africa and Latin America. In 1990, according to the Energy Department, these countries produced 32 million barrels of oil per day, or 46 percent of total world output. By 2025, however, they are expected to deliver 77 million barrels, or 61 percent of global output. Over this same thirty-five-year period, the combined production of the United States, Canada, Mexico, Australia and Europe will drop from 29 percent to 19 percent of total world output. With America's domestic production in decline, an ever-increasing share of its oil requirements will have to be satisfied by imports, meaning greater US dependence on oil supplied by countries in the Middle East, Africa and other non-Western areas.

These countries show a high degree of instability, much of it induced by the legacies of colonialism and a preponderance of unrepresentative political institutions. Nigeria, for example, has experienced periodic outbreaks of ethnic disorder in the Niger Delta region, the source of most of its petroleum; both Angola and Azerbaijan harbor ethnic separatist movements; and Saudi Arabia and Iraq have been the repeated targets of attacks on oil facilities and related infrastructure. In none of these countries can the uninterrupted extraction and export of oil be taken for granted, and so the American economy is becoming increasingly exposed to supply disruptions in overseas producing areas.

In the face of this peril, American leaders have placed ever-increasing reliance on the use of military force to protect the global production and transport of oil. This trend began in 1980, when President Jimmy Carter vowed that the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf would be assured "by any means necessary, including military force." The same basic premise was subsequently applied to the Caspian Sea basin by President Clinton, and is now being extended by President Bush to other producing areas, including Africa. All of this entails the increased involvement of US military forces in these areas—and it is to facilitate such involvement that the Defense Department seeks new bases and "operating locations."

Normally, Pentagon officials are reluctant to ascribe US strategic moves to concern over the safe delivery of energy supplies. Nevertheless, in their explanations of the need for new facilities, the oil factor has begun to crop up. "In the Caspian Sea you have large mineral [i.e., petroleum] reserves," observed General Charles Wald, deputy commander of the US European

Michael T. Klare is a professor of peace and world security studies at Hampshire College and the defense correspondent of The Nation. *His most recent book is* Blood and Oil: The Dangers and Consequences of America's Growing Petroleum Dependency *(Metropolitan).*

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Command (EUCOM), in June 2003. "We want to be able to assure the long-term viability of those resources." Wald has also spoken of the need for bases to help protect oil reserves in Africa (which falls under the purview of the EUCOM). "The estimate is [that] in the next ten years, we will get 25 percent of our oil from there," he declared in *Air Force* magazine. "I can see the United States potentially having a forward operating location in São Tomé," or other sites in Africa.

Of the dozen or so locations mentioned in Pentagon or media accounts of new basing locations, a majority—including Algeria, Azerbaijan, Cameroon, Gabon, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Qatar, Romania, São Tomé and Príncipe, Tunisia—either possess oil themselves or abut major pipelines and supply routes. At the same time, many of these countries house terrorist groups or have been used by them as staging areas. And, from the Pentagon's perspective, the protection of oil and the war against terrorism often amount to one and the same thing. Thus, when asked whether the United States was prepared to help defend Nigeria's oilfields against ethnic violence, General Wald replied, "Wherever there's evil, we want to go there and fight it."

Equally strong geopolitical considerations link the pursuit of foreign oil to American concern over the rise of China. Like the United States, China needs to import vast amounts of petroleum in order to satisfy skyrocketing demand at home. In 2010, the Energy Department predicts, China will have to import 4 million barrels of oil per day; by 2025 it will be importing 9.4 million barrels. China will also be dependent on major producers in the Middle East and Africa, and so it has sought to curry favor with these countries using the same methods long employed by the United States: by forging military ties with friendly regimes, supplying them with weapons and stationing military advisers in them. A conspicuous Chinese presence has been established, for example, in Iran, Sudan and the Central Asian republics. To counter these incursions, the United States has expanded its own military ties with local powers—and this in turn has helped spark the drive for new basing facilities in the Gulf and Caspian regions.

The search for new bases is also being driven by the Pentagon's new strategic outlook. During the cold war era, most overseas US troop deployments were defensive—intended to deter Soviet expansionism in Europe and Asia and to provide the means for effective resistance should deterrence fail. True, some of these bases were also used to support covert operations against pro-Soviet regimes in the Third World and to promote other US interests, but for the most part their role was static and defensive—and it is this passivity that Rumsfeld and his associates seek to do away with. Instead, the Bush Administration and its neocon allies seek to fashion a more assertive, usable combat force. This new outlook is encapsulated in *The National*

Outposts of Empire

The Defense Department has not yet selected all of the future locations for its new constellation of overseas facilities. But Pentagon officials are known to have visited a number of sites to assess their potential utility for this purpose, and both the Congressional Research Service and the Congressional Budget Office have speculated on a number of others.

Eastern Europe: According to the CBO the Pentagon is interested in the establishment of three or more forward operating locations in Eastern Europe. In Poland it is looking into the use of several facilities once occupied by Soviet forces. In Romania much attention has been paid to the air base at Mihail Kogalniceanu and the Black Sea port of Constanta. Both were used to ferry troops and equipment to Iraq, and Secretary Rumsfeld visited these facilities in October to weigh their future utilization by American forces.

Central Asia and the Caucasus: The Pentagon currently maintains two forward operating locations in this region: at Khanabad in southern Uzbekistan and at Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. These bases are being used to support combat operations in Afghanistan, and the Pentagon has indicated that it plans to retain them for some time to come. In addition, the United States is refurbishing the former Soviet air base at Atyrau, on Kazakhstan's Caspian Sea coast; the White House says this facility could be used by US and Kazakh troops for "joint training in the area of counter-terrorism." The Defense Department is also considering the acquisition of a similar facility in Azerbaijan, which is now receiving US funds for the creation of its own Caspian Sea navy.

Persian Gulf: America's elaborate basing infrastructure in the Gulf area will be expanded with the acquisition of permanent facilities in Iraq. More than a year ago, the *Chicago Tribune* revealed that US military engineers are busy constructing fourteen "enduring bases" for American forces in Iraq. These facilities are said to include an assortment of former Iraqi army bases; the airports at Baghdad and Mosul will also be expanded to house US military aircraft. Elsewhere in the region, the Pentagon will retain its facilities in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and the United Arab Emirates. The large air base at Al-Udeid in Qatar is being expanded to house the US personnel once stationed in Saudi Arabia.

Africa: The Pentagon has already established two forward operating locations in North Africa: At Tamanrasset Airport in southern Algeria and at Camp Lemonier, a former French Foreign Legion post in Djibouti. It is also looking at possible sites for "bare bones" facilities in several countries south of the Sahara, including Cameroon, Gabon, Ghana, Mali, Namibia, Senegal, South Africa and Uganda, as well as São Tomé and Príncipe in the Gulf of Guinea.

Asia and the Pacific: Under plans announced by President Bush last August, the Pentagon will redeploy about 12,500 combat troops from South Korea to Iraq and shift the remaining US forces in South Korea from Seoul and its environs to less congested areas farther south. The first step was taken to enhance security in Iraq's beleaguered cities, and the second to reduce US forces' vulnerability to North Korea's long-range artillery and to afford greater maneuverability in the event of a war. Elsewhere in the region, the Pentagon is considering the establishment of bases in Australia and the eventual return of US forces to their former installations in the Philippines, from which they were expelled in 1991. M.T.K.

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Defense Strategy of the United States of America, a report just released by the Defense Department: "Our role in the world depends on effectively projecting and sustaining our forces in distant environments where adversaries may seek to deny US access," the document says. The military doctrine forged by the Bush Administration also envisions pre-emptive military action or, more accurately, preventive strikes intended to cripple an enemy's combat capability before it can be developed to the point of actually posing a threat to American interests.

Being able to strike first against all conceivable future adversaries translates into two types of military capabilities: a capacity to move forces into combat quickly and seize the battlefield initiative; and an ability to deliver combat power to any corner of the globe, no matter how distant or inhospitable. These necessitate a whole new constellation of overseas bases. Because speed and agility require installations that are geared to logistical efficiency rather than defensive might, older bastions must be replaced by new facilities geared to transiting offensive forces; and because new adversaries could arise in areas far removed from existing US bases, new facilities are needed in any potential site of conflict. Hence the desire for new logistical hubs and "bare bones" facilities in every region of the world.

Finally, the Pentagon's search for new basing facilities is being driven by the altered political landscape of the post–cold war era. The installations acquired in Germany, Japan and South Korea during the cold war were primarily intended for the defense of those and neighboring countries, and so were largely welcomed by the governments involved. In most cases, these bases were embedded in an alliance relationship and reflected a shared strategic vision. "The cold war provided an overarching framework," John Hamre of the Center for Strategic and International Studies told the Congressional Overseas Basing Commission in November. "The important factor in that strategic framework is that it incorporated the national interests of host nations, not just the United States. Our military presence in a given country protected them from invasion or hostile action by others—the host country and the United States shared the same risks and the same enemy."

Today, save for South Korea, such facilities are no longer intended to buttress the common defense but rather for use as steppingstones for the deployment of American forces to other areas of the world—often in operations that do not have the support of the host nation, such as the war in Iraq. And the South Koreans have begun to express strong differences with the United States over how best to deal with Pyongyang—with many favoring a strategy of reconciliation instead of confrontation. Even Turkey, a long-term US ally, refused to allow the Pentagon to use its territory as a launching pad for the invasion of Iraq. All of this has led to considerable anxiety at the Pentagon over the possibility that more restrictions will be placed on the use of bases in these countries for what are called "out of area" operations.

In the face of this challenge there is "a purposeful effort to possibly leave places where they may not want us or they are snubbing us," a senior military official told Esther Schrader of the *Los Angeles Times* in May 2003. "The Eastern Bloc countries have reached out to us.... They are looking for a partnership." These more welcoming states, presumably including Poland,

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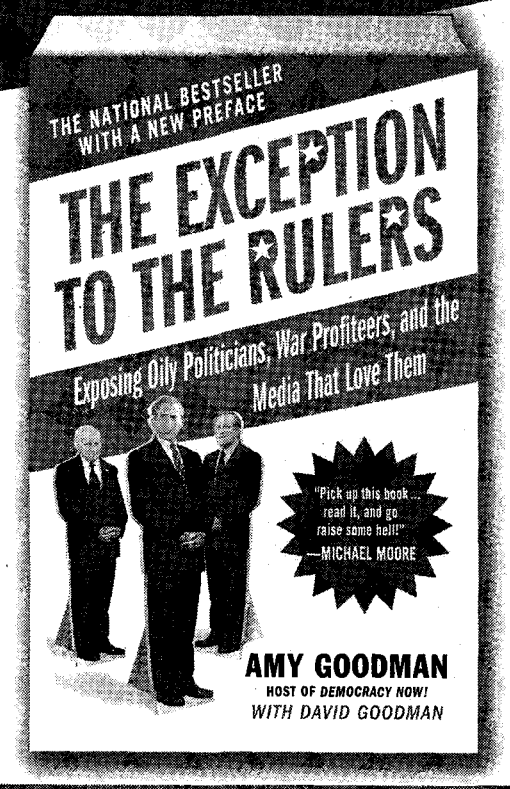
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Romania, Bulgaria, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, are not as concerned as some of our older allies over the use of their territory to facilitate US military operations in other countries. And their acquiescence is a major factor in the base-realignment plan.

It is not clear exactly when the Defense Department will complete the reassessment of its overseas basing requirements and complete the actual redeployment of American forces. Some of the initiatives described above have already begun, while others remain on the drawing board. There is no doubt, however, that a major realignment of American power is under way that entails a seismic shift in the center of gravity of American military capabilities from the western and eastern fringes of Eurasia to its central and southern reaches, and to adjacent areas of Africa and the Middle East. This is certain to involve the United States more deeply in the tangled internal politics of these regions, and to invite resistance from local forces—and there are many of them—that object to current US policies and will resent a conspicuous American military presence in their midst. Far from leading to a reduction in terrorism, as advertised, these moves are certain to provoke more of it.

Finally, the American power shift from outer Eurasia to its troubled interior is certain to arouse concern and antipathy in Russia, China, India and other established or rising powers in the region. Already, Russian leaders have expressed dismay at the presence of American bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan—territories that were once part of the Soviet Union. The recent political upheaval in Kyrgyzstan and the ouster of President Askar Akayev—long considered friendly to Moscow—is certain to exacerbate their concerns. At the same time, Chinese officials have begun to complain about what they view as the "encirclement" of their country. Although reluctant to take on the Americans directly, leaders of Russia and China have talked of a "strategic partnership" between their two countries and have collaborated in the establishment of a new regional security organ, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. None of this is likely to lead soon to the outbreak of hostilities, but the foundation is being set for a great-power geopolitical contest akin to the European rivalries that preceded World Wars I and II. ■

IF AMERICA HAD AGREED TO A NUCLEAR-FREE WORLD, WE WOULDN'T FACE THREATS TODAY.

Bin Laden's Nuclear Connection

KAI BIRD AND MARTIN J. SHERWIN

In his interviews and writings over the past decade, Osama bin Laden has repeatedly talked about America's atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He believes (incorrectly) that it was the atomic bombings that shocked the Japanese imperial government into an early surrender—and, he says, he is planning an atomic attack on America that will shock us into retreating from the Middle East.

For an Administration that believes that the only thing it has to fear is the absence of fear, Osama's threat is a helpful reminder that we live in a dangerous world. "It may only be a matter of time," President Bush's recently installed CIA director, Porter Goss, told the Senate Intelligence Committee, "before Al Qaeda or another group attempts to use chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons."

While such threats cannot be ignored, it is important to historicize and contextualize them if we are to understand how we have contributed to undermining our own security. There were alternative policies at the beginning of the nuclear age that our government could have followed—and could still promote—that would have mitigated the dangers we face today. There were people then, as now, who recognized that the knowledge of how to construct and deploy atomic bombs could not be kept secret for long. And there were people then, as now, who recognized that such bombs could be smuggled into major urban areas—meaning there is no defense against nuclear terrorism. Chief among those who clearly saw the nuclear future—as we have lived and are living it—was the "father of the atomic bomb," J. Robert Oppenheimer, who developed a plan for a nuclear-free world and did his best to promote this alternative path.

The history of Oppenheimer's failure to contain the nuclear genie makes clear that unilateralism and hubris are hardly unique to the Bush Administration; they have been a recurrent characteristic of US decision-making ever since the latter years of World War II. America's nuclear monopoly was "the great equalizer," Secretary of War Henry Stimson triumphantly declared in July 1945 at the Potsdam conference upon learning of the success of the atomic bomb test at Alamogordo, New Mexico. The bomb was our "trump card," our "ace in the hole," President Truman and his closest advisers believed. But others, more informed and more thoughtful, like Oppenheimer, realized that the bomb was a Trojan horse that would soon threaten our own security as much as it threatened the security of others. Oppenheimer's efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons at the beginning of the atomic age are as applicable today as they were then.

On October 25, 1945, Oppenheimer was ushered into the Oval Office to meet Truman to discuss his plans to eliminate nuclear weapons. By one account, Truman opened the conversation by

Kai Bird and Martin J. Sherwin are the authors of American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer *(Knopf), from which this essay is adapted.*

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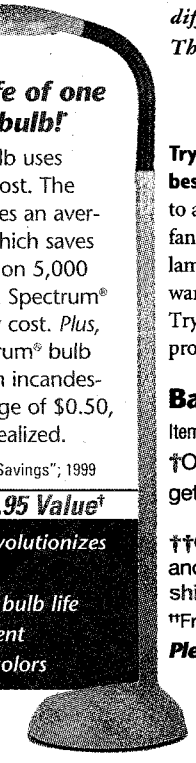

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stating, "The first thing is to define the national problem, then the international." Oppenheimer disagreed. "Perhaps it would be best first to define the international problem," he cautiously replied. He meant, of course, that the first imperative was to stop the spread of atomic weapons by placing international controls over all atomic technology. At one point in their conversation, Truman suddenly asked him to guess when the Russians would develop their own atomic bomb. When he replied that he did not know, Truman confidently said he knew the answer: "Never." For Oppenheimer, such foolishness was proof of Truman's limitations. The "incomprehension it showed just knocked the heart out of him," recalled the Los Alamos scientist Willy Higinbotham.

A week later, on November 2, Oppenheimer returned to the Los Alamos nuclear weapons laboratory. Some 500 people packed into the facility's theater to hear "Oppie" talk about what he called "the fix we are in." He spoke for an hour—much of it extemporaneously—and his audience was mesmerized; years later, people would say, "I remember Oppie's speech." "It is clear to me," he said, "that wars have changed. It is clear to me that if these first bombs—the bomb that was dropped on Nagasaki—that if these can destroy ten square miles, then that is really quite something. It is clear to me that they are going to be very cheap if anyone wants to make them."

A few days earlier, Truman had given a bellicose "Navy Day" speech in New York in which he had reveled in the atomic addition to America's military power. The bomb, Truman said, would be held by the United States as a "sacred trust" for the rest of the world, and "we shall not give our approval to any compromises with evil." Oppenheimer disliked Truman's triumphalist tone: "If you approach the problem and say, 'We know what is right and we would like to use the atomic bomb to persuade you to agree with us,' then you are in a very weak position and you will not succeed.... You will find yourselves attempting by force of arms to prevent a disaster."

In late January 1946 Oppenheimer was nevertheless heartened to learn that negotiations begun several months earlier had resulted in an agreement between the Soviet Union, the United States and other countries to establish a United Nations Atomic Energy Commission. Pressured by veterans of the Manhattan Project and their media supporters, Truman appointed a special committee to draw up a concrete proposal for international control of nuclear weapons.

As the only physicist on the board—indeed, as the only member of the board who knew anything about atomic energy—Oppenheimer naturally dominated their discussions, and he quickly persuaded his fellow panel members to endorse a dramatic and comprehensive plan. Turning to the internationalism of modern science as a model, Oppenheimer proposed an international agency that would monopolize all aspects of atomic energy and apportion its benefits as an incentive to individual countries. Oppenheimer believed that in the long run, "without world government there could be no permanent peace, [and] that without peace there would be atomic warfare." Since world government was not a prospect, Oppenheimer argued that in the field of atomic energy all countries should agree to a "partial renunciation" of sovereignty.

Under his plan, the proposed Atomic Development Authority

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would have sovereign ownership of all uranium mines, atomic power plants and laboratories. No nation would be permitted to build bombs—but scientists everywhere would still be allowed to exploit the atom for peaceful purposes. Complete and total transparency would make it impossible for any nation to marshal the enormous industrial, technical and material resources necessary to build an atomic weapon in secrecy. Oppenheimer understood that one couldn't un-invent the weapon; the secret was out. But one could construct a system so transparent that it would at least provide ample warning if a rogue regime set about to make an atomic weapon.

Soon afterward, Oppenheimer's draft plan, which became known as the Acheson-Lilienthal Report, was optimistically submitted to the White House. But optimism was misplaced. While Secretary of State James Byrnes made a pretense of saying that he was "favorably impressed," he was in fact shocked by the sweeping scope of the report's recommendations. A day later he persuaded Truman to appoint his business partner, Wall Street financier Bernard Baruch, "to translate" the Administration's proposals to the United Nations. When Oppenheimer read the news, he told his Los Alamos friend Willy Higinbotham, by then president of the newly created Federation of Atomic Scientists, "We're lost."

In private, Baruch was already expressing "great reservations" about the Acheson-Lilienthal Report's recommendations. Like his advisers, Baruch was alarmed by the idea that privately owned mines might be taken over by an international Atomic Development Authority. (Both Baruch and Byrnes happened to be board members of and investors in Newmont Mining Corporation, a major company with a large stake in uranium mines.) And, as far as atomic weapons were concerned, Baruch thought of the US bomb as a "winning weapon." In short order negotiations broke down completely over the question of "penalties." Why, Baruch asked, was there no provision for the punishment of violators of the agreement? He thought a stockpile of nuclear weapons should be set aside and automatically used against any country found in violation.

Disregarding the opinion of most scientists, Baruch decided that the Soviet Union would not be able to build its own atomic weapons for at least two decades, and thus that there was no need to relinquish the American monopoly anytime soon. Consequently, the plan he intended to submit to the UN would substantially amend—indeed, fundamentally alter—the Acheson-Lilienthal proposals: The Soviets would have to give up their right to a veto in the Security Council over any actions by the new atomic authority; any nation violating the agreement would immediately be subjected to an attack with atomic weapons; and, before being given access to any of the secrets surrounding the peaceful uses of atomic energy, the Soviets would have to submit to a survey of their uranium resources. What Baruch was proposing was not cooperative control over nuclear energy but an atomic pact designed to prolong the US monopoly.

On June 14, 1946, Baruch presented his plan to the UN, dramatically stating that he offered the world "a choice between the quick and the dead." As Oppenheimer and his colleagues had predicted, it was promptly rejected by the Soviet Union, which proposed as an alternative a simple treaty to ban the production

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Saturday April 23

- 10:30 – Rebecca Solnit - Panel: "Weaving a True Tale"
- 11:00 – Ved Mehta - Panel: "Writers in Exile"
- 11:30 – Larry Beinhart, Eric Alterman and Jon Wiener - Panel: "Lies, Deceit, & Cover-ups"
- 12:30 – Adam Shatz - Panel: "Islam Now"
- 1:30 – Victor Navasky - Panel: "Hollywood & the Reds"
- 2:00 – Jonathan Schell - Panel: "Outsourcing Democracy: Can it Work?"

Sunday April 24

- 10:00 – Katrina vanden Heuvel - Panel: "Searching for a Civil Society: America's Contemporary Political Culture"
- 10:00 – Peter Biskind - Panel: "The Movie Biz: Making Deals & Cutting Throats"
- 10:30 – Melissa Boyle Mahle and Stephen Cohen - Panel: "The New World Order"
- 12:00 – Norma Barzman - Panel: "Witness to a Persecution: The Blacklist Revisited"
- 1:00 – Christopher Hitchens - Panel: "Are We Making the World Safe for Democracy?"
- 1:30 – Marc Cooper - Panel: "A Sense of Place: The Literature of Cities"

Come and meet Nation Books and Nation magazine authors at the following signings at Booth 344

Saturday, April 23

- 12:00 – Jonathan Schell, The Jonathan Schell Reader
- 1:00 – Rebecca Solnit, Hope in the Dark
- 2:00 – Marc Cooper, The Last Honest Place in America
- 3:00 – Jon Wiener, Historians in Trouble
- 4:00 – Norma Barzman, The Red and the Blacklist

Sunday, April 24

- 11:00 – Adam Shatz, Prophets Outcast
- 12:00 – Katrina vanden Heuvel, Taking Back America
- 1:00 – Peter Biskind, Gods and Monsters
- 1:30 – Victor Navasky, A Matter of Opinion
- 2:00 – Melissa Boyle Mahle, Denial and Deception
- 3:00 – Larry Beinhart, The Librarian

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or use of atomic weapons. The Truman Administration rejected the Soviet response out of hand. Negotiations continued in a desultory fashion for many months, but to no end.

An early opportunity had been lost to make a good-faith effort to prevent an uncontrolled nuclear-arms race between the two major powers. It would take the terrors of the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, and the massive Soviet buildup that followed it, before a US administration in the 1970s would propose a serious and acceptable arms control agreement. But by then it was too late to prevent an arms race and the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Oppenheimer's anguish was real and deep. Every day the newspaper headlines gave him evidence that the world might once again be on the road to war. "Every American knows that if there is another major war," he wrote in *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* on June 1, 1946, "atomic weapons will be used." This meant, he argued, that the real task at hand was the elimination of war itself. "We know this because in the last war, the two nations which we like to think are the most enlightened and humane in the world—Great Britain and the United States—used atomic weapons against an enemy which was essentially defeated."

He had made this observation earlier in a speech at Los Alamos, but to publish it in 1946 was an extraordinary admission. Less than a year after the events of August 1945, the man who had instructed the bombardiers exactly how to drop their atomic bombs on the center of two Japanese cities had come to the conclusion that he had supported the use of atomic weapons against "an enemy which was essentially defeated."

A major war was not Oppenheimer's only worry. Sometime that year he was asked in a closed Senate hearing room "whether three or four men couldn't smuggle units of an [atomic] bomb into New York and blow up the whole city." Oppenheimer responded, "Of course it could be done, and people could destroy New York." When a startled senator then followed by asking, "What instrument would you use to detect an atomic bomb hidden somewhere in a city?" Oppenheimer quipped, "A screwdriver [to open each and every crate or suitcase]." There was no defense against nuclear terrorism—and he felt there never would be. International control of the bomb, he later told an audience of Foreign Service and military officers, was "the only way in which this country can have security comparable to that which it had in the years before the war. It is the only way in which we will be able to live with bad governments, with new discoveries, with irresponsible governments such as are likely to arise in the next hundred years, without living in fairly constant fear of the surprise use of these weapons." Today he would add Osama bin Laden's terrorists to his list. ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

New York City

■ I always suspected that Christo and Jeanne-Claude were charlatans, beginning with my distrust of people who go by one name and dye their hair funny colors. These habits I take as evidence that their true interest lies simply in attracting attention and creating public spectacle. I live close to Central Park and walked its length several times while The Gates were up. I was unimpressed by the orange (sorry, not saffron) curtains suspended from chunky goal posts, so different from the ethereal effect suggested by the renderings circulated in advance of the installation. I was unprepared, however, for the throngs of visitors—New Yorkers and tourists—who filled the park during those cold February weeks; looking, lingering, posing, offering opinions to total strangers and experiencing our park in a different way from ever before. This was indeed a gorgeous "populist spectacle," as the authors so well put it. In this day and age when we witness the relentless drive to privatize public space (and everything else), it is indeed reassuring to see the power of public use of public space for good collective social and artistic purposes.

BELMONT FREEMAN, *president*
Storefront for Art and Architecture

GRATZ & GOLDSMITH REPLY

New York City; Salt Lake City

■ Central Park has definitely not been privatized. It is a prime example of a very public space restored primarily with private funds and still run by the city's Parks Department. Decisions about what can happen there are city administration decisions, not those of the Central Park Conservancy, which, over many years, raised the millions to make the park restoration happen.

That the artists and their collectors gained financially from The Gates may indeed be true. But nobody gained more than the city of New York and the millions of residents and visitors who enjoyed this unique event. That is the bottom line. As for the suggestion that we chose to "pass over" aesthetic questions, we chose to celebrate the aesthetics of Olmsted's elegant, timeless forms rather than attack any of the awkwardness in Christo's temporary gates; perhaps our subtlety passed over the reader.

John S. Berman may be right about Vaux being the more democratic of the Olmsted-Vaux team, but what is most interesting is the glorious end product of the collaboration of these two exceptionally creative minds. Olmsted gave form to a vision (Vaux's, perhaps, in this case). It often takes two innovative thinkers to create something great. Christo and Jeanne-Claude gilded that vision to create for today a populist spectacle the likes of which neither New York nor any American city had ever witnessed.

Even with the quibbles illustrated above, our basic point remains unchallenged: The Gates demonstrated the strength of culture and well-designed public space to draw strangers together in a moment of great camaraderie. What a great expression of democracy this event reflected!

ROBERTA BRANDES GRATZ
STEPHEN A. GOLDSMITH

NOT YOUR FATHER'S WAR PROTESTERS

Brunswick, Me.

■ Thank you for Karen Houppert's March 28 "The New Face of Protest?" Like the author, I'm a military brat. My mother is retired from the Navy, and my father is still active-duty Air Force. Since the war in Afghanistan began, and particularly since being galvanized by the Iraq War, I have struggled with the conflicting loyalties of fierce opposition to this Administration's policies and a fierce love for my family.

I live in a town that hosts both a liberal arts college and a Naval Air Station, and we see this divide every day. At first the lines were clear-cut between those who opposed the war and those who were fighting it. Over the last two years, however, I have been gratified to see the increasing ambiguity of those distinctions, in my community and in my family. There are many in the military who have put in time in the "sandbox" and have been embittered by what they consider an abuse of their willingness to serve their country. Others, like my father, who spent a year in Saudi Arabia during the attack on Iraq, may not have embraced a definite antiwar stance, but they believed the President's rationale for war and have had their faith in their commander in chief shaken in the years since. It is starting in the military, where service people miss their families and can see Iraqi ambivalence first-hand. Over the next four years, I believe many civilians will experience a similar epiphany.

CHRISTINA TOTH

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(Continued From Page 5)

Loving concern for the earth and its inhabitants, refusal to accept inequality and abhorrence for violence are themes on which philosophical antagonists can unite, but first their philosophical differences will have to be confronted in dialogue. It is difficult to see how Catholics can engage in that dialogue with secular progressives, and with the other world religions, if dialogue in their own church is so attenuated. The Pope leaves, then, an ambiguous legacy. His vision of a more just social order inspired millions. His refusal to democratize the church and to recognize the rights of women suppressed some of the church's most vital forces and made alliances between Catholics and progressives with other philosophical and religious commitments problematic. It remains to be seen if Catholics who identify with the opening to the world of Pope John XXIII will now reclaim their church. Severe conflict is inevitable, no matter who the next Pope is. No doubt, Pope John Paul II was a giant, but the debate he willed to his church resembles a dense, even tortured, soliloquy. NORMAN BIRNBAUM

Norman Birnbaum is professor emeritus of Georgetown University Law Center. His most recent book is After Progress: American Social Reform and European Socialism in the Twentieth Century *(Oxford).*

Addicted to the Courts

Justice Anthony Kennedy's recent 5-to-4 opinion in *Roper v. Simmons* banning the death penalty for 16- and 17-year-olds reinforces my Supreme Court habit. While the decisions are often 5-to-4 cliffhangers, and while the Bush White House may succeed in finding new appointees willing to silence the Court's voice, the current Court is still capable of delivering powerful legal highs. The remarkable judicial odysseys of Kennedy and the late Harry Blackmun; Sandra Day O'Connor's stubborn search for a middle ground; John Paul Stevens's enduring wisdom and intellectual leadership; Ruth Bader Ginsburg's steely brilliance; the decent pragmatism of David Souter and Steven Breyer; and the occasional overlap between Antonin Scalia's quirky literalism and intense constitutional protection have coalesced to uphold affirmative action, beat back efforts to reverse *Roe v. Wade*, invalidate laws criminalizing sodomy, reinvigorate the rights of confrontation and trial by jury, uphold campaign finance reform, protect free speech rights and reject government efforts to invent legal black holes into which terrorism suspects can be dropped.

Being addicted to such an institution is understandable; but it is also dangerous—and not only because the voting patterns are so fragile. Don't get me wrong. Judicial addictions are not always negative. Over the past fifty years, progressives, in close partnership with the courts, have helped to reinvent this nation, moving from the deeply racist and homophobic 1950s characterized by widespread misogyny, frequent eruptions of police violence, ongoing acts of religious intolerance and recurring spasms of political repression to a contemporary America that, while far from perfect, is at least a place where toleration—racial, political, religious, gender and sexual—has become a mainstream value.

But, important as courts have been, judicial fiat, standing alone, did not change American culture. Time and again, progressives reinforced the moral prophecy of the courts with intense po-

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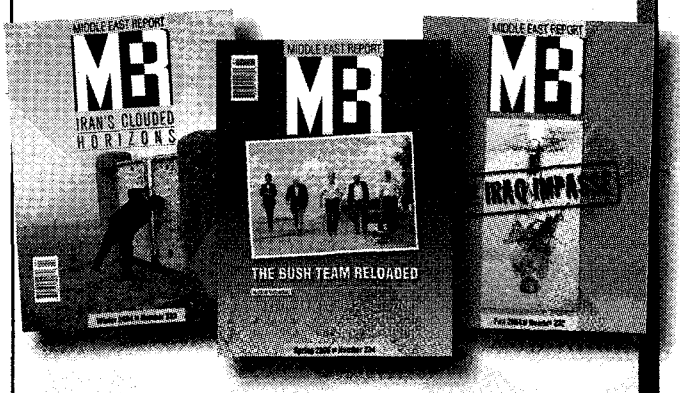

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litical activity designed to persuade the majority that the Supreme Court's pronouncements were not just law, they were also law that is just. For example, *Brown v. Board of Education*'s call for racial justice in 1954 was followed by Dr. King's grassroots appeal to the moral conscience of the nation, calling on us to renounce a legacy of racism. Significantly, *Brown* succeeded in changing the culture, but only as far as Dr. King succeeded in persuading the nation.

The assault on gender stereotyping followed a similar pattern. Ginsburg's judicial victories when she headed the ACLU's Women's Rights Project in the early 1970s were supported by a brilliantly orchestrated movement designed to persuade Americans that it is unjust to deny women an equal chance to pursue their dreams. The combined effect of Supreme Court victories and related grassroots activity defending the fairness of the benchmark ushered in a gender revolution that altered America. No similar organized movement facilitated public acceptance of the Supreme Court's barrage of revolutionary free speech decisions, which began with *New York Times v. Sullivan*. But who needs a formal movement when the self-interest of the media results in a constant drumbeat of support for the idea of free speech—a drumbeat that ultimately forged such broad acceptance of a robust free speech principle that flag-burning was deemed constitutionally protected by a left-right coalition that stretched from Justices Brennan and Marshall to Justice Scalia, with Justice Kennedy in the middle.

In recent years, many progressives appear to have lost the habit of following up judicial victories with grassroots movements. Simply put, too often the appeal to courts is treated as the end of the political process, not its beginning. Three examples suffice.

The battle over abortion rights has never developed an effective movement designed to explain why abortion is fundamentally fair. The high moral ground was ceded to opponents who stressed its moral complexity. The progressive response was an abstract defense of individual autonomy that winds up sounding hedonistic, together with hairsplitting distinctions about when human life begins. That may be fine for courts, but it does not persuade ordinary people. In the early 1990s Ginsburg, by then a judge on the Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit, recognized the problem and urged that *Roe* be defended politically, not on its own terms but as a matter of necessity in order to permit women to function equally in the society. She was shouted down by lawyers afraid of weakening the precedent. It's not too late to take her advice.

The gay rights movement, winner of a great judicial victory in *Lawrence v. Texas*, when the Supreme Court invalidated criminal sodomy laws, immediately redoubled its judicial bets by challenging laws banning same-sex marriage. That may be good law, but it's terrible politics. A grassroots movement designed to explain why it's unfair to deny gays the ability to live together in stable relationships would result in widespread support for legally protected civil unions and pave the way for popular acceptance of same-sex marriage. Without such a campaign, opponents have been permitted an open shot to argue the unfairness of imposing unwanted changes on a historic, religion-based institution.

Finally, defenders of the wall between church and state have relentlessly pressed to remove religious imagery from the public square without seeking to persuade the public that it's fundamentally fair to do so. Legalistic arguments simply do not convince many well-meaning people who feel cheated when their religious symbols are banned. Nor do claims that onlookers are somehow harmed merely by viewing such symbols, as long as everyone has an equal right to have the symbol of his or her choice, including symbols of atheism, displayed. We don't allow secular speech to be banned because it offends onlookers. Why should religious symbols be subject to "heckler's veto"? Thus, unlike abortion and gay rights, where powerful fairness-based arguments exist in defense of judicial decisions if only we would deploy them, I'm not sure that in this case a persuasive fairness rationale exists.

Progressives pay a heavy price for failing to defend the fairness of our judicial victories at the grassroots. In the short run, we weaken judicial precedents, leaving them exposed to criticism that they are unfair and undemocratic—which ultimately may result in the selection of judges willing to overturn them. In the long run, we pay an even heavier price by galvanizing opponents bent on freeing themselves from what they perceive as elitist disrespect for democratic governance. The margin of victory in the 2004 presidential election may well have come from religious believers in Ohio who voted against their economic self-interest to protest judicial decisions that appeared to them to attack their belief systems without good reason. As progressives, we owe it to our fellow citizens to seek to persuade them why it's fair to ask them to forgo acting on deeply felt beliefs. Most of the time, we can tell a compelling story that will convince many, and, at a minimum, provide a basis for engaging the skeptical. If we can't, maybe the decisions just aren't worth defending. BURT NEUBORNE

Burt Neuborne, the John Norton Pomeroy Professor of Law and Legal Director of the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law School, served as national legal director of the ACLU during the Reagan years.

In Fact . . .

MEET THE ARTIST

■ Rick Meyerowitz, who created this week's "ComixNation," says he "was born and lives and works and votes in New York City, and has a sense of humor about the whole thing."

MINORITY/MAJORITY

■ **Permanent Minority**: Not one senator has raised serious objections to the nomination of GOP Representative Rob Portman of Ohio as US trade representative, despite Portman's long record of supporting unregulated free trade. The *Columbus Dispatch* reports that Portman "is expected to win easy confirmation by the Senate" even though he is Ohio's lowest-ranked member of Congress by the US Business and Industry Council—the leading nonprofit representing America's family-owned manufacturers and fighting for fair trade.

■ **Toward the Majority**: On a high-profile trip to Alabama, Democratic Senator Russ Feingold highlighted how free-trade policy is ravaging the region's economy. Feingold is one of the few in the Senate with a credible record on trade; among potential presidential candidates, he's the only one who voted against the China free-trade deal. DAVID SIROTA

ON THE WEB

■ Tom Hayden profiles Francisco Letelier, artist/activist son of the murdered Chilean diplomat (www.thenation.com).

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

Tangled Up in Bob

DAVID YAFFE

LIKE A ROLLING STONE: Bob Dylan at the Crossroads.
By Greil Marcus.
PublicAffairs.
283 pp. $25.

DYLAN'S VISIONS OF SIN.
By Christopher Ricks.
Ecco.
517 pp. $26.95.

CHIMES OF FREEDOM: The Politics of Bob Dylan's Art.
By Mike Marqusee.
New Press.
327 pp. $24.95.

CHRONICLES, VOL. 1.
By Bob Dylan.
Simon and Schuster.
293 pp. $24.

In 1964 Bob Dylan issued an invitation to his literary exegetes that roared out a warning. "Come writers and critics who prophesize with your pen," Dylan famously urged in "The Times They Are A-Changin'." He later added a clause to "mothers and fathers throughout the land" that the writers and critics might have heeded: "Don't criticize what you can't understand." Go ahead and write about me, sang Dylan, but do so at your peril. The writers and critics prophesizing with their pens have accepted his invitation, but did they take his advice? Dylan has given an excuse for many critics to sound off, with an influential rock critic's bravado, a distinguished academic's throat-clearing and an impassioned politico's plea. Yet while the critical corpus continues to pile up around Dylan, each of those writers and critics prophesized before they had a chance to read the first installment of Dylan's own memoir, *Chronicles, Vol. 1*, a book as incomplete, inconclusive and untrustworthy as it is shockingly lucid and brilliantly counterintuitive. In the near future Dylan will be the subject of a Martin Scorsese documentary, an authorized Todd Haynes biopic in which he will be played by seven actors (including an as-yet-to-be-cast African-American woman, possibly Oprah or Beyoncé), and a Twyla Tharp dance spectacle (his idea—really). And he will continue touring the world, sublimely wheezing through his back pages while apparently writing and recording a new batch of songs. He's still busy being born, and so, apparently, is the industry of Dylan books, his own the most salient among them. The others, by those writers and critics, range from Greil Marcus's 283-page rumination on the cultural impact of the classic rock warhorse "Like a Rolling Stone" to Christopher Ricks's 500-plus-page Empsonian reading of Dylan among the poets, psalms and footnotes to Mike Marqusee's investigation of Dylan and those pesky old 1960s that Dylan keeps trying to shake off his boots. They're trying to get closer, but are they still a million miles away from him?

I will refrain from making a top-ten list of the best recent Dylan books, but Greil Marcus wouldn't. Marcus loves to make lists. As a role model for the record-collecting nerd hero of Nick Hornby's *High Fidelity* and former writer of the *Salon* column "Real Life Rock Top 10," Marcus is a compulsive ranker, the most legendary one in the rock press. Open up the *Rolling Stone* record guide, or old issues of the magazine, and see Marcus's judgment drive critical consensus with stars and a soundbite. "He's never sounded so utterly fake," he pronounced of 1978's *Street Legal*, pushing Dylan further into despair and Christianity. And in the most legendary lead in the history of rock criticism, when he was the record review editor of *Rolling Stone*, a magazine that, after all, partly took its name from a certain Dylan song, he asked of 1970's *Self Portrait*, "What is this shit?" The question got him fired.

The magazine recently did some of its own characteristic listmaking of "The Five Hundred Greatest Songs of All Time" and—surprise!—"Like a Rolling Stone" was, like, The Greatest Song of All Time. ("All time," incidentally, began with Elvis and has lasted about fifty years.) Marcus is such an adept listmaker that, at a recent presentation on Dylan's "Masters of War," he said that the song wouldn't even make his top-100 list of Dylan compositions, which he would surely happily provide. And so it is in this hierarchical spirit that, pegged to the fortieth anniversary of the song's release, Marcus has written *Like a Rolling Stone: Bob Dylan at the Crossroads*, an extended contemplation of that Greatest Song. In or around 1965, human

David Yaffe is the author of Fascinating Rhythm: Reading Jazz in American Writing, *which will be published by Princeton University Press in December.*

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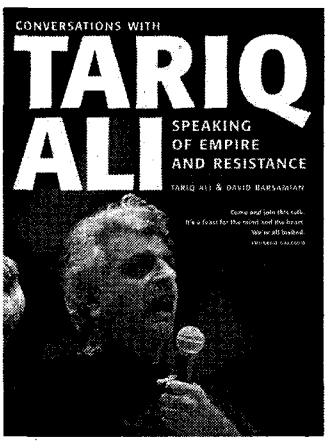

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nature changed, and the book explores the considerable seismic shifts American culture took around, during and within "Like a Rolling Stone," from the confines of Columbia Record's Studio A to the book depository at Dealey Plaza, where JFK was assassinated, to the trenches of My Lai and beyond. Marcus, like Dylan himself, had the pressure of living up to his past glories, and the achievement of his book about Dylan's *Basement Tapes*, which has gone through three different titles and is currently called *The Old, Weird America*, is considerable. For if you're a "real" Dylan fan, the "real" *Basement Tapes*—1967 sessions from Dylan's Woodstock home eventually parceled out in 1975—are not the officially released tracks on Columbia but a series of bootlegs covering a range of Americana. It's an obscurity uncovering more obscurities, and Marcus's book—whatever it may be called—sheds light on the arcana. He spends seven pages contemplating Dylan's bootleg-only "I'm Not There." Magisterial, hypnotic and unfinished, the song is worth every bit of lavish attention that Marcus gives it, with a passion as eloquent as it is infectious.

Unlike "I'm Not There," "Like a Rolling Stone" is a song that anyone with a modicum of exposure to classic rock radio—i.e., most people in the developed world—would know. There are no old-timey folk legends to unveil or unreleased gems to polish. In 1965 record executives wondered if a pop single could be sustained for six minutes. In 2005, no one doubts that the same single might be worth 200 pages of analysis. Even so, this short book feels padded. When Marcus cribs from his tattered old notes on Jonathan Edwards or Emerson from his grad-student days at Berkeley, or unpacks the connections between Charley Patton's 1929 "High Water Everywhere" and Dylan's 2001 "High Water"—and he knows those scratchy old records groove by groove—he's instructive. When he opines with oracular authority on subjects just about anyone has an opinion about, he's simply exasperating. Out of nowhere, he pronounces that the Beatles' *Rubber Soul* is "the best album they would ever make." (Why? Marcus never explains.) The Rolling Stones' *Let It Bleed* and Dylan's *Highway 61 Revisited*, which leads off with the The Greatest Song of All Time, share the title of "the best rock 'n' roll album ever made." Dylan's 1966 Manchester concert with the Band (then known as the Hawks), released as *Live 1966*, was "likely the greatest rock 'n' roll show ever played." Such hyperbolic assessments are the stuff of consumer guides, of course, but do they have a place in serious cultural criticism? Is *Hamlet* the Greatest Play Ever Written? List, oh list.

Marcus's writing has always been more about making connections (from the inspired to the improbable) than drawing conclusions. As the *New York Observer* memorably quipped, "everything reminds him of everything." In a section on cover versions of "Like a Rolling Stone," Marcus quotes the singer from a band called the Mystery Tramps, who introduces the song by explaining, "This is a story about a girl who goes from riches to rags, and it's a drag, so check it *ouuuuuut*." "It's the most reductive story in the song," says Marcus. Maybe so, but his book would have benefited from being more reductive, instead of darting hither and thither from reference to reference. It might even have gotten him to the Old, Weird America he has so successfully plumbed elsewhere.

"Like a Rolling Stone" explodes with fury, but it's never been clear exactly who its target is. The speculations have ranged from Joan Baez in particular to his audience in general, with more than a shmear of misogyny in the former case, misanthropy in the latter. Miss Lonely, who has—according to that "reductive" reading—gone from riches to rags, is asked in a tone of bitter contempt how it feels to be like a rolling stone. It was Muddy Waters who proudly intoned, "I'm a rolling stone," and Hank Williams wasn't ashamed of identifying himself that way either. (In D.A. Pennebaker's *Don't Look Back*, filmed shortly before the song was written, Dylan is caught backstage playing Williams's "Lost Highway" with its "I'm a rolling stone" lyric.) Miss Lonely graduated from "the finest school all right," but no one ever taught her how to "live out on the street." Like many a white college student in 1965, she might have fetishized an old bluesman like Waters, but she probably would not have wanted to live like him.

The anger of the song, in other words, is partly about being a simulacrum rolling stone, a pseudo bluesman. In *Chronicles, Vol. 1*, while Dylan steers clear of 1965, that crucial year in his career, he does describe a moment in a considerably less fecund year for him, 1987, when the 46-year-old burnout of *Knocked Out Loaded* came closer to finding his own inner Muddy Waters than the 24-year-old wunderkind of *Highway 61 Revisited*. He recalls taking a break from a listless rehearsal with the Grateful Dead in California (anyone who has heard *Dylan & the Dead* would understand his despair) and

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wandering off to a jazz dive, where an old black singer got under his skin. "The singer reminded me of Billy Eckstine," Dylan recalled. "He wasn't very forceful, but he didn't have to be; he was relaxed, but he sang with natural power. Suddenly and without warning, it was like the guy had an open window to my soul. It was like he was saying, 'You should do it this way.'" Dylan had a revelation that he didn't need to strain to hit notes coming from a younger man's angst long eviscerated by nicotine and howling. Rather, he could dig into his lower register and become not just like a rolling stone but closer to the thing itself.

For Marcus, though, Dylan at his best is already the thing itself, and Marcus at his best has some vivid descriptions of Dylan performances darting around a vast record collection and amassed experience. The book also has a completely bizarre, head-scratching climax involving a Pet Shop Boys "togetherness" anthem. Yet *Like a Rolling Stone*, despite its exasperating moments, will still be essential reading for anyone who wants to get closer to Dylan's masterpiece of vitriol. Because Dylan can't simply go through the motions of professional nostalgia, he performs the song differently at every stop—sometimes with power and gusto, sometimes with a seemingly drunk halfheartedness, several keys lower than the whippersnapper of 1965. On his current tour with Merle Haggard, he's dropped the song from his usual encore. No one really knows why Dylan does anything, and he did provide a well-deserved blurb for Marcus's *Old, Weird America*, but could it be that, unless Victoria's Secret models and $1.25 million are involved, Dylan's not doing product placement? Or has Marcus's book made him too self-conscious of the song's broader significance, making it harder for him to simply belt out a heartfelt performance, if, every time he has to sing it, he's At the Crossroads, Changing Popular Music Forever—playing the Best Song Ever Written? If you witness the encore of a Dylan concert and he avoids "Like a Rolling Stone" in favor of "Mississippi," "All Along the Watchtower" or even Haggard's "Sing Me Back Home," you might get a hint of how it feels for Dylan right now. The mystery tramp refuses to be solved.

If Greil Marcus indulges in some of the giddy associations of the lapsed graduate student, though, in *Dylan's Visions of Sin*, Christopher Ricks displays the Olympian but not always illuminating erudition of the eminent academic. It's quite a leap across the pond from Muddy Waters to the Oxford Professor of Poetry, and Ricks is aware that his own Anglophilic reading list is not the same as that of his venerated subject. "I certainly don't make many claims for allusion," Ricks told the *Boston Globe*. "I don't think that 'Lay, Lady, Lay' is an allusion to 'Come, Madam, come.' I think that there are an extraordinary number of affinities between the Donne poem ["To His Mistress Going to Bed"] and the Dylan song, and the affinities...are very illuminating." For more than 500 pages, Ricks dotes over Dylan lyrics and tries to tease out affinities between selected Dylan songs and the seven deadly sins, the four heavenly graces and his own Miltonic, Keatsian, Tennysonian and Eliotic predilections, along with puns, chummy asides and learned ruminations. Dylan is indeed a reader, who not only went through a well-known religious phase as a born-again Christian but also scattered Old Testament prophecy throughout his earlier work, particularly on the 1967 *John Wesley Harding*. And there's no argument with Ricks that Dylan has a way with words. But there is no evidence that Dylan ever conceived of the grand schema the professor lays out for him in *Dylan's Visions of Sin*. "We hate poetry that has a

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palpable design upon us," wrote Keats, a shared favorite of Ricks and Dylan. The design of Ricks's book is palpable.

Dylan's songs, of course, are intended for the ear and not the eye. Betsy Bowden, a medieval literature scholar by training who published the first scholarly book on Dylan back in 1982, said it all in her title: *Performed Literature*. Dylan's lyrics, Bowden states, "are not poems. They are songs: words and music combined for oral performance." Dylan has mentioned Keats as an influence in interviews, and famously imagined Eliot and Pound "fighting in the captain's tower" in "Desolation Row," but wresting the words from the performances, and their cultural context—at least the way Ricks does it—ends up saying much about the learned author of *Dylan's Visions of Sin* but surprisingly little about its purported subject. Even when looking at the words themselves, Ricks's donnish sleight of hand can shockingly miss the meaning of the lyrics.

The section on Dylan's 1983 song "Blind Willie McTell" is as revealing an example as any of how Ricks can get lost in the minutiae of dictionaries and literary and biblical concordances while losing track of what the song is actually about. He discusses William Tell's arrow (since the first line of the song contains the word "arrow"), makes many references to the Psalms (not a bad hunch, since Dylan was still on the tail end of his fire and brimstone mode) and many asides to let you know that the Warren Professor of Humanities at Boston University and this year's choice for Oxford Professor of Poetry is aware of Homer's and Milton's blindness. "William Tell's arrow hit the apple on the head of the apple of his eye, his son. Since Mc means 'son of,' the son of William Tell may be living in another country under another name: William, or Willie, McTell."

Over twenty pages of precious wordplay and meta-Dylan references (to "Gotta Serve Somebody"), Ricks does not even mention that Dylan was not merely summoning up William Tell or adding the "Mc" for any fancy reason, but that McTell was an actual blues musician and the song's true subject. Blind Willie McTell was not blind because of Milton but because he was blind from birth. And the McTell of the song was so named not because of William Tell but, according to legend, because a teacher at a school for the blind had mistakenly changed it from "McTear." Music and history don't exist for Ricks's own metaphorical convenience.

"Them charcoal gypsy maidens/Can strut their feathers well/But nobody can sing the blues/Like Blind Willie McTell." Dylan's use of "charcoal" suggests that he is not only singing about black women wearing ruffled feathers but perhaps also about minstrel singers with charcoal-smeared faces, imitating and appropriating the blues, which, Dylan plainly says, McTell sings better than anyone else. Minstrelsy has long been an obsession for Dylan: He named his 2001 album *Love and Theft* after Eric Lott's landmark study of blackface minstrelsy of the same title, and even had Ed Harris in blackface as a minstrel fury in his 2003 film *Masked & Anonymous*. But for Ricks, it's all about phrase placement, dictionaries, Milton's "L'Allegro," anything and everything on Ricks's shelf but the song and its themes, racial guilt and Dylan's anxiety of influence as a white bluesman. *Dylan's Visions of Sin* is a cautionary tale about the kinds of elaborate misfires that can occur when his words are stripped from their musical and cultural contexts. Dylan's been with this professor, and he likes his looks, but there's something happening there, and Ricks doesn't know what it is. Still, *Dylan's Visions of Sin* also shows that Dylan can appeal to the passions of an extremely learned and accomplished scholar, and it's worth noting that Dylan himself invited Ricks and his wife backstage after he played a gig at BU, Ricks's turf. The conversation has been kept a secret. One hopes, at the very least, that Dylan saw his name bandied alongside canonical selections from the *Norton Anthology of Poetry* and felt gratified to be placed in such visionary company.

Professor Ricks is very well-read, it's well-known. He knows something is happening here, but he doesn't know what it is.

But if there is one group with whom Dylan currently resists association despite, or perhaps because of, his formidable contribution, it's the 1960s counterculture. When the brash young Dylan of '65 quipped, "You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows," he might have thought he could make it into *Bartlett's* (he did), but how could he have predicted that, just five years later, three allusively named Weathermen would set off a bomb on Manhattan's West 11th Street and accidentally die in his name? And when it did happen, and self-styled "Dylanologists" were digging through his trash, chanting outside his apartment and parachuting into his Woodstock home, how could he have felt? Hardly like a member of Woodstock Nation. Mike Marqusee's *Chimes of Freedom: The Politics of Bob Dylan's Art* is sensitive to this incongruity. Years before the Weathermen, Dylan marched with SNCC and was an opening act for Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. But his period of political engagement was but a sliver of time (albeit glorious), from 1962-63. And he has since admitted, in *Chronicles*, to having a soft spot for Barry Goldwater and has still refused to take a position on the war in Vietnam or, more recently, Iraq.

The cover of the book has Dylan getting his Guthrie on circa 1963, complete with a plaid work shirt, tattered jeans and a waterfront in the background, just waiting to unite some workers of the world. Marqusee writes like a professional journalist but isn't out of his depth when he busts out the Adorno and Marcuse. He's an anguished, aging New Lefty who wants to let Bob be Bob but wishes he'd crawl out his window a little more to fight the good fights. Dylan, of course, is the last person who ever wanted to be a voice of a generation, as he told Ed Bradley on *60 Minutes* last winter, and as he says repeatedly in *Chronicles*. But Marqusee and Dylan are also keenly, painfully aware that the moment for Dylan to be that voice has long passed anyway, even if some stray, incoherent remarks before a subpar performance at Live Aid twenty years ago did help raise millions of dollars for struggling American farmers. Dylan may have allowed Bank of Montreal to use "The Times They Are A-Changin'" in 1996, but the songs of that 1962–63 period continue to provide a soundtrack to civil (and, in the case of the Weathermen, uncivil) disobedience. At a recent protest in the streets of Taipei, the words of Dylan still resound, even as they are somewhat lost in translation: "How many rocky roads must the people of Taiwan walk, before really achieving democracy?"

Marqusee doesn't idealize the Dylan of that period. Even when he was pointin' fingers at the assassins of Medgar Evers or the sociopathic good old boy who knocked off poor Hattie Carroll, he was still a royal pain in the ass: Accepting the Tom Paine Award, he got toasted before the speech and told the crowd, weeks after the Kennedy assassination, that he identified with Lee Harvey Oswald. As Marqusee aptly put it: "Throughout the sixties, Dylan is

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writing both within the historical tide and against it." If you remember the 1960s, the cliché goes, you weren't really there. But for Dylan, emblematic and inspiring as he was, he wasn't there, he was gone. At one point, after Marqusee has established an earnest, responsible argument about Dylan's place in the 1960s, he issues the following judgment about Dylan's capacities as a prose writer: "Without the verse structure, without the disciplines of popular music, Dylan flounders, as readers of *Tarantula* will know." That statement was perfectly fair back when *Chimes of Freedom* was published in 2003. Marqusee must have rued it as soon as he received his review copy of *Chronicles*.

Marqusee is correct that *Tarantula*, Dylan's 1971 novel, is, despite the claims of a minority of well-meaning and sensitive apologists, an incoherent mess, a sophomoric imitation of *Finnegans Wake* that without a rock-star byline would have languished in a publisher's slush pile. In *Chronicles*, Dylan steers clear of Joyce and instead recalls the plain-spoken voice of *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Bound for Glory*, although its hidden allusions and true intent could prove to be as elusive and opaque as in a Modernist novel. But it is compulsively readable, a kooky journey where he can remember every shop and bar that lined Bleecker Street in 1961, every blade of grass outside Archibald MacLeish's house in 1970 and every thought that ever went into the making of two curios from his *oeuvre*: 1970's *New Morning* and 1989's *Oh Mercy*. While there are many puzzling observations and omissions, Dylan is very clear when it comes to how the hero of *Chronicles* differs from that of *Chimes of Freedom*. "The big bugs in the press kept promoting me as the mouthpiece, spokesman, or even conscience of a generation. That was funny. All I'd ever done was sing songs that were dead straight and expressed powerful new realities." Oh, that's all.

Dylan continues to perform those songs as a vehicle for expressing powerful new realities, but the further he gets from their political moment, the less they are about pointing his finger at a topical issue and the more they become eternal and strange. Nowhere is this more recent incarnation of old protest anthems more apparent than in the closing credits of *Masked & Anonymous*. Dylan starred in the film, co-wrote the script and made a movie that was almost a complete train wreck (although a fascinating one for revealing the allegorical contents of Dylan's brain). But then, on the voiceover, Dylan intones a monologue that introduces an eerie version of "Blowin' in the Wind," not one that demands answers to questions but a slower, weirder version that never expects to really figure out how many roads a man must walk down. "Truth and beauty are in the eye of the beholder," Dylan rasps as the song begins playing, doffing his cowboy hat to Keats. But he follows that up with a gnomic shrug, in what could be an apt response to all those writers and critics prophesizing with their pens: "I stopped trying to figure everything out a long time ago." ■

About a Boy

VIVIAN GORNICK

EXTREMELY LOUD & INCREDIBLY CLOSE.
By Jonathan Safran Foer. Houghton Mifflin. 326 pp. $24.95.

Literary cultures often produce the wunderkind they need—or perhaps deserve—in times of dramatic stress. In America, for example, during the sentimentally reckless 1920s, we had Edna St. Vincent Millay; in the hauntingly depressed 1930s, Delmore Schwartz; the viciously passive 1950s brought us Norman Mailer. Each of these writers was famous by the age of 25, and each was experienced as some blazing incarnation of an underlying mood of the time.

Not every writer who achieves literary celebrity young, however, is a child wonder. Among the books written by those under the age of 25 are *The Pickwick Papers*, *Buddenbrooks*, *The Red Badge of Courage* and *Notes of a Native Son*. None of the authors of these books was thought of as a wunderkind. It's interesting to consider why some are, and others are not; the distinction might be worth making.

Jonathan Safran Foer is definitely a wunderkind: a writer immensely celebrated some years ago for a remarkable novel that he began as an undergraduate and completed before he was 24 years old. This novel—*Everything Is Illuminated*—was received as a major event in publishing not only because of the writer's youth and talent but because it seemed to encompass the breadth of human experience, and in a manner richly compatible with that of our moment. Daniel Mendelsohn, for instance, wrote that while the book pretended to be about what it said it was about, it was really about "love, history, memory, narrative, and death—and that's just for starters." This review was typical of the generous pleasure with which readers everywhere greeted an ambitiously complicated fictional scheme that wove three voices and two strands of storytelling together with a degree of energetic inventiveness that was indeed exhilarating.

At this point I must announce a churlish reservation: The emotional—not to mention intellectual—wisdom that had sent all this virtuoso writing into action left many readers (myself included) more puzzled than gratified.

In *Everything Is Illuminated* a character named Jonathan Safran Foer goes to Ukraine in search of the woman who supposedly saved his grandfather from the Nazis. He employs a Ukrainian youth named Alex (who travels with his own grandfather, also named Alex) to help him (Jonathan) find his way to the village of Trachimbrod, where he hopes to track down the woman in question. Alex narrates the story of their journey. Interwoven with his narration is an imagined tale of magic realism that recounts the history of Trachimbrod from 1791 to World War II; this is the second narration. The third narration is Jonathan's overview of the entire adventure. In short: The novel is multilayered and much crosscut.

The creation of Alex is the book's true enchantment: His fractured English is pure joy. Using a thesaurus to figure out how to write in English, Alex composes sentences like

> Many girls want to be carnal with me in many good arrangements.

> The three of us, the three men named Alex, gathered in Father's house to converse the journey.

Vivian Gornick's new book, The Solitude of Self: Thinking About Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *will be published in the fall by Farrar, Straus & Giroux.*

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> Grandfather and I viewed television for several hours after Father reposed. We are both people who remain conscious very tardy.

Nabokov would have nodded benevolently at this performance (remember *Pnin*?).

On the other hand, the imagined history of Trachimbrod (embedded in the "magical" birth and equally magical life of Jonathan's great-great-great-great-great grandmother) is a piece of pious mythmaking of the sort that makes many hearts—all right, my heart—sink. Decked out in the self-conscious colors of fable, and floating around in a delirium of folkloric invention, the residents of Trachimbrod resemble the levitating creatures in a Chagall painting. They are, of course, not characters at all (nor were they meant to be); they are the clichés of an ethnic-mythic Yiddishism that owes more to *Fiddler on the Roof* than to I.B. Singer. Then, bringing us full circle and neatly tying up the fairy tale search for Jewish ashes among the Nazi ruins, we have the "startling" revelation that Alex's grandfather lived right near Trachimbrod during the war and, trapped in a "Sophie's choice" of his own, helped identify Jews for the Nazis.

I turned the final page of *Everything Is Illuminated* thinking: How well this book combines a working imagination with the rings that a gifted writer can run around received fantasy and historical melodrama. But I couldn't quite see the point of invoking these cultural conventions without struggling to achieve the kind of literary transformation that justifies their use.

Now we have a second novel from Foer, and surprisingly (or perhaps not surprisingly), the same conceit is at work: layers of storytelling, lots of crosscutting and a fablelike "quest" in progress: one that also results from a world-class disaster. This time the search—one that will take our protagonist on a selective journey through the New York telephone book—is for a lock that will fit a key belonging to the narrator's father, who died in the World Trade Center attack.

The narrator of *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* is a 9-year-old boy who—in all his odd originality—is a kind of literary equivalent of Alex the Ukrainian. When we first meet Oskar Schell he is in the back seat of a limo with his grandmother, who is annoying him with her continual caressing: "So I climbed into the front seat and poked the driver's shoulder until he gave me some attention. 'What. Is. Your. Designation.' I asked in Stephen Hawking voice." The grandmother offers, "He wants to know your name." The driver hands the child his card (on the page we have an actual representation of the card). The child hands the driver his card. "Greetings," he says. "I. Am. Oskar." The driver asks him why he is talking like that. Oskar replies, "Oskar's CPU is a neural-net processor. A learning computer. The more contact he has with humans the more he learns." The driver says, "O." And then he says, "K." The narrator confides, "I couldn't tell if he liked me or not." (Indeed.)

Oskar's first-person narration alternates with intervals of letters written in the 1960s to Oskar's now dead father by his grandfather—a survivor of the Dresden firebombing who stopped speaking after the war (he's got a YES and a NO tattooed on either hand for all necessary communications), and who abandoned Oskar's grandmother at the time of his child's birth, and who may or may not be back in the picture. (Got all that?)

The representation of the driver's card on the page is a prefiguration of much that is to come. Later on, we will even have a representation of Oskar's card that carries his self-described identity: "inventor, jewelry designer, jewelry fabricator, amateur entomologist, Francophile, vegan, origamist, pacifist, percussionist, amateur astronomer, computer consultant, amateur archeologist, collector of: rare coins, butterflies that died natural deaths, miniature cacti, Beatles memorabilia, semiprecious stones, and other things." We will also encounter many pages that are blank; or appear with one line of print on them, or a single word or sentence; or are so jammed with print not a word is legible. There are also pages (in riotous color) that resemble the pads of scrawl in stationery stores used for trying out pens, pages with words or sentences circled in corrective red and photographs: many, many photographs. The book itself is a kid's construct.

This is the framework within which we experience the captivating quality of an unlikely protagonist whose confiding voice comes to us, again, in a blaze of virtuoso writing crammed with inventive riffs on everything under the sun. Sprinkled among them are some lovely lines of poetic insight parceled out among the characters:

> She was extending a hand that I didn't know how to take, so I broke its fingers with my silence.

> [The] secret was a hole in the middle of me that every happy thing fell into.

> She put her hand over her [laughing] mouth, like she was angry at herself for having forgotten her sadness.

> "I don't know if I've ever loved your grandfather. But I've loved not being alone."

Essentially, Oskar is a child of the Internet. He doesn't know who Winston Churchill is or what the Great Depression was—although he does know that 70 percent of household dust is actually composed of human epidermal matter—but not to worry: He will Google "Churchill" as soon as he gets home. At the same time, his intelligence is far from artificial. He always knows when he's in the presence of a fool, as any smart kid would. He tells the therapist he's seeing at his mother's insistence that he doesn't find sports fascinating. The therapist asks what he does find fascinating, and we have the following exchange:

> "What kind of answer are you looking for?" "What makes you think I'm looking for something?" "What makes you think I'm a huge moron?" "Why do you think you're here, Oskar?"... "I'm here, Dr. Fein, because it upsets my mom that I'm having an impossible time with my life." "Should it upset her?" "Not really. Life is impossible."... "Do you think any good can come from your father's death?" I kicked over my chair, threw his papers across the floor, and hollered, "No! Of course not, you fucking asshole!" That was what I wanted to do. Instead I just shrugged my shoulders.

At the center of Oskar's 9-year-old being is the deep, spreading, never-to-be-forgotten pain he feels at having lost his father on what he repeatedly refers to as "the worst day." His picaresque search for the lock that matches the key he found in his father's closet is the mourning ritual that will keep his father with him until he can bear the pain of his loss. It is also the excuse the book needs to keep invoking the father, who, for this boy, was indeed the world. All Oskar wants is that the world—that is, the world he went to sleep in on September 10, 2001—be returned to him. It appears that this is what the author of his being also wants.

The book closes with a long passage in which Oskar imagines the whole of September 11 in reverse:

> The plane would have flown backward away from [Dad], all the way to Boston.... He would've walked backward to the subway.... read the *New York Times* from right to left.... He would've gotten

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> back into bed.... He would've walked backward to my room, whistling "I Am the Walrus" backward. He would've gotten into bed with me.... He would have told me the story [again] from "I love you" to "Once upon a time..." We would have been safe.

After these words we have fifteen copies of a photograph of the side of the World Trade Center with an object in the sky that resembles a falling body slowly reversing itself, picture after picture, until it disappears back into the building.

I sat staring at the final photograph of a World Trade Center with a clean and empty sky beside it, thinking, *That's it?* Is this the literary use to which "the worst day" is to be put? If only we could roll back time and still be the children who imagined themselves safe the night before? If that's all it amounts to, Oskar's father might as well have been killed in a car crash.

If *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* is as popular with readers as *Everything Is Illuminated*, it will be because Foer is indeed the wunderkind the country needs and therefore deserves: a writer of talent who exploits holocaust to mythicize the most aggressive self-pity in modern American history, the kind that feeds relentlessly on a nostalgia that seriously reduces whatever chance we have of understanding what we are living through.

It seems to me that the second set of writers mentioned at the beginning of this piece achieved work of large and lasting vision while still in their 20s because—and this is what was remarkable in those so young—they wrote without sentiment, cynicism or nostalgia, looking long and hard not so much at the mood of their time as into the dark heart of the time, bringing to bear on a fired imagination a strong, grown-up intelligence that drew the reader a lot closer to "Why is this happening?" rather than "Why is this being done to me?" ■

OBITUARY

The X-Files

ANDERS STEPHANSON

Born in 1904 during Teddy Roosevelt's first Administration, and dead on March 24, 2005, under a very different kind of Republican rule, George Kennan took his last stance as a public intellectual when he was about to turn 100. The issue was the impending invasion of Iraq. Kennan considered it ill advised. The official justifications for war struck him as flimsy, the servile reaction by the leadership of the Democratic Party "shabby and shameful." When Colin Powell traveled up to Princeton later to pay homage on Kennan's hundredth birthday, the Secretary, though doubtless aware of these views, nevertheless saw fit to liken the Iraqi operation to containment.

Till his dying days, Kennan could not get away from supposedly having been the "architect" of containment, the master signifier and reference point of all US foreign policy since the beginning of the cold war. He was 42 in 1946 when he wrote (or rather dictated) the so-called Long Telegram in Moscow, the text that, along with the famous "X-Article" in *Foreign Affairs* the following year, came to establish rigidly the official view of the Soviet danger and, putatively, the containment doctrine designed to deal with it. I doubt he imagined that he would live nearly another sixty years; and I am quite sure he didn't think he would have to spend a good number of them regurgitating what he really meant and didn't mean by "containment." Kennan considered Powell an honest person, and the latter may actually have believed what he said; but his remarks must have perturbed the old man then, as they might perturb Powell now (then again, probably not). Containment was Kennan's claim to fame and his everlasting curse.

Whatever the meaning of containment, a "doctrine" it was decidedly not: Kennan would recoil at the congenital US affinity for "doctrines" to be applied across the geopolitical board. Containment, by contrast, was a simple answer to an altogether too simple analysis of what the Soviet Union was all about. Kennan argued that Moscow, for specific historical and ideological reasons, was inherently expansionist and utterly inimical to the West, indeed to all forms of power not under its own control. To placate or "deal" with this regime, as Franklin Roosevelt had tried to do, was hopeless and counterproductive. The Soviet Union and its allies could only be contained, stopped in their tracks, thwarted in their natural logic of expansion. The regime should be treated as a pariah, not just as a hostile but recognizable political competitor. Real diplomacy and negotiation were counterproductive until, in effect, the Soviet Union ceased being the Soviet Union.

The decisive aspect of these two texts (whose internal contradictions and errors I leave aside) was precisely Kennan's prescriptive refusal to deploy the traditional means of diplomacy in relations with Moscow, his insistence that nothing serious could be achieved by way of negotiation on fundamental issues of mutual concern until the entire nature of the regime had changed. I take this to be the decisive aspect of the cold war as well, the aspect of warlike hostility under formal conditions of peace that made the conflict a *cold* war as opposed to a nasty but essentially traditional conflict of international relations. In my view, this posture fundamentally shaped US foreign policy until the early 1960s, when the Cuban missile crisis, the Sino-Soviet split and other factors rendered it largely obsolete. Kennan's responsibility for the cold war, it would seem, was thus far from negligible. Perhaps Powell had a point?

Not quite. Kennan's ideological frame, even in 1946–47, was not that of the cold war as it came to be played out, which is why he found himself already breaking with the emerging orthodoxy in 1948, opposing as he was by then the militarization of the conflict (NATO) and advocating a deal with Moscow on German unification. That he was painfully unsuccessful in both cases had to do with the fact that his views had been inserted, quite plausibly, into a crusading, universalizing ideology of good and evil to which he did not adhere. More particularly, "the refusal" of containment made perfect sense within the now common-sensical truth about what had gone wrong in the 1930s and brought about World War II—namely, that the democracies had disgracefully appeased the totalitarians while the United States had done nothing at all. The same mistakes, assuredly, would not now be made with re-

Anders Stephanson, the James P. Shenton Professor of American History at Columbia University, is the author of, among other books, George Kennan and the Art of Foreign Policy *(Harvard).*

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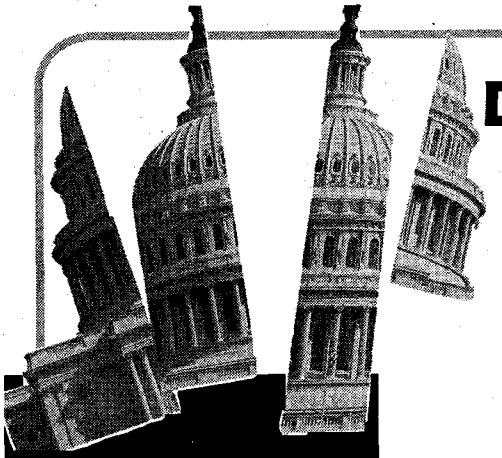
gard to the Soviet Union and international communism, the one remaining enemy.

Fill in the blanks here and you have the endlessly repeatable story of every single postwar crisis, real or imagined, that the United States has faced. "Saddam as Hitler" is scarcely the last appearance of the Munich analogy. Though it was ignored at the time, Kennan himself was not really appealing to the story about the 1930s or even talking much about the totalitarian threat to freedom. His comparison was actually negative in that Stalin, unlike Hitler, wasn't given to adventurism but was quite sensitive to material differences of power. Hence Kennan was optimistic, the West being objectively much stronger than the Soviet Union.

That Kennan did not invoke the appeasement analogy perhaps owed something to the fact that he had had strong affinities for appeasement in the late 1930s. The chief reason, however, was that, as a conservative of the communitarian and sometimes authoritarian kind, he was suspicious of generalities, particularly historical analogies featuring "abstractions." He preferred particularities, or what he called "realities." Stalin was real. The apparatus he controlled at home and abroad was real. Communism, by contrast, was something else. Kennan was thus never a conventional anticommunist. He was against communism and fought communists, sometimes with means he would later regret. He certainly thought, at least for a while, that the Stalinist dictatorship should be fought fiercely in every conceivable way but open war. But he had no sympathy for the idea that the United States was engaged in a universal struggle against a singular, monolithic enemy called communism.

As with all ideologies and grand abstractions, however, he viewed communism as an illusion and a delusion. And the same held true, if not with the same degree of perniciousness, for the ideology of US universalism. As Kennan later put it, he did not find "any special universal virtues in our political system or our way of life." He considered it a product of unique historical circumstances, like its Soviet counterpart, and not to be applied formulaically across the universe.

Being ideologically anti-ideological, Kennan said more about Soviet ideology in his foundational texts than he usually did, much to his later regret. The notion of containment, nevertheless, was not really about ideology. His account of the Soviet Union had centered, as was his wont, on its alleged "nature" as



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a specific phenomenon. As was also his wont, the analysis was couched in a language seductively metaphorical and suggestive—a language whose sources of inspiration had little to do with the ideology of the embryonic cold war.

First, "containment" was the language of disease and disease control. Soviet communism was for Kennan "a malignant parasite." To prevent spreading infection and epidemics, one must initially diagnose the disease and identify the nature of the parasite—its developmental logic, so to speak—after which it might be isolated and encircled, its potential targets (suitably important ones) inoculated. Witness the Marshall Plan: Deprived of feeding grounds, the parasite would eventually die out or mutate into something essentially benign. Second, "containment" was the language of flood control, managing an overflowing river that threatened to invade every available opening and destroy everything in its way. The spatial imagery evokes dams, walls and physical obstacles. How Kennan's prescription would eventually serve to overcome these obstacles was far from clear, one reason he found himself attacked by strident cold warriors. Whatever the image, the fact remained that, for Kennan, Soviet policy was entirely a product of its internal nature, not of anything that the outside world—i.e., the West—might be doing politically. One does not negotiate with a parasite or an overflowing river: One acts energetically to stop them, in the event of a crisis.

The problem with this view, of course, was that the Soviet regime was none of those things. As Kennan himself would write (though after Stalin was gone), the Soviet leaders were "in the business of national power. They have inherited the governmental responsibility for a great state—one of the major traditional units in the contemporary international family—with its people, its history, its traditions, its aspirations, its prejudices, and its rivalries. Like others who are in business, they like to win friends and influence people." Decent relations between states, he now insisted, must "be dialectical ones, embracing contradictory elements," featuring both "pressure and conciliation," a willingness to defend as well as a willingness "to concede" and "to be generous." This was not the spirit of the global project of the United States known as the cold war.

What had been appealing and resonant initially about Kennan's analysis was not so much his concept of containment as his depiction of the totally unalterable enemy, in relation to which all conciliatory moves would be at once useless and immoral. Little attention was paid, then or since, to the essentially amoral character of his images. Despite his reference to Soviet "fanaticism," one could hardly blame a parasite for being a parasite or a river for overflowing. These were objects, threatening objects to be sure, in line with the objectified Soviet regime, but objects nonetheless as opposed to moral agents. To neutralize them seemed an almost technical matter, a matter of detached analysis, clarity, science, engineering, efficient professionalism, preferably carried out (he implied) by competent people such as Kennan himself, far from the madding crowd and the messiness of domestic politics. If this aspect was not really noted, critics did begin to quarrel with the allegedly passive aspect of containment as strategy. From the standpoint of the cold war consensus, the problem was that containment might well just leave the evil empire in place.

As was stated implicitly in NSC 68—the powerful 1950 *summa* of cold war thinking in the Truman Administration—and explicitly by containment's Republican critics, this strategy seemed to mean an unacceptably long moment of waiting for Godot while letting the evil forces roam pretty much freely within their confines. Hence the clamor in the early 1950s for "rollback," a supposedly active policy of muscular confrontation. In practice, however, Republicans and Democrats alike followed Kennan's erstwhile precept. The fundamental reason was simple. Containment may have been based on faulty premises, but as it was appropriated into a universal division of good and evil, its "positive" side—the prophylactic building of a global, anticommunist system led by the United States in the name of "the free world"—turned out to be immeasurably more important than the "negative" need to destroy Moscow in the name of rollback.

The project of eradicating evil turned out to be more important than actually achieving it. Indeed, it was precisely because it was wrong that containment worked so beautifully as cold war policy, the essence of which was to render unshakable the US commitment to globalism. Containment, meanwhile, did not destroy the Soviet Union but rather maintained it. Kennan's actual policy of mutual withdrawal from central Europe (a notion initially borrowed from Walter Lippmann) would have changed the Soviet Union long before that change came to pass.

Throughout the 1950s, Kennan derided

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the "triumphant and excited and self-righteous anti-communism" and the "image of the totally inhuman and totally malevolent adversary." By the end of the decade, his concrete policy positions (on Germany, nuclear weapons, recognition of interests) seemed closer to Moscow's than to those of his own government. Ultimately, despite an emphatic sense of citizenship, his allegiances were civilizational rather than national, to "the West" rather than to the United States. And by this time he had begun to see the Soviet Union as part of the "conservative-authoritarian" tradition he thought had been "the norm" in the West during the Christian era, not at any rate a state "hideous in the sight of God." Nationalism was by contrast one of his civilizational targets. He despised Wilsonian notions of self-determination along with the related principle of national sovereignty. "Could anything be more absurd," he asked, "than a world divided into several dozens of large secular societies, each devoted to the cultivation of the myth of its own unlimited independence?" The "world," at any rate, was not the site of an all-encompassing struggle between the free world and communism. It was precisely such mistaken cold war notions, Kennan thought, that were turning the world into a potential burial ground.

For Kennan, then, the world was never dichotomous. It was a myriad of discrete entities, different in nature, most of them best left alone and not very important anyway (one reason he found the Vietnam War monumentally wrong-headed). What mattered, civilizationally, was that none of the major industrial regions/power constellations ever went to war against one another, nuclear weaponry having made war unthinkably destructive. Kennan's model was shaped by what he considered the crucial calamity of the twentieth century, a century he experienced almost in its entirety, namely World War I. And behind that implosion lay the nascent nationalism of industrializing, urbanized economies in the late nineteenth century, the emergence of easily roused "masses," standardization and fake egalitarianism, the advent of cancerous growth and a whole series of other ills.

Thus, first within the Truman Administration and then, after 1950, as a vocal public intellectual, Kennan came gradually to sense (if not entirely to see) the scope of his dissent. Amid the phantasmagorical world of the cold war, with its global interventionism and nuclear fixations, he turned his diagnostic attention increasingly from the Soviet Union to the United States and its ills. It was tragic, he came to think, that the United States should have been thrust into a position of international leadership, a position for which this immature power—"one of those prehistoric monsters with a body as long as this room and a brain the size of a pin"—was decidedly unqualified. On the domestic side, he had nothing but disdain for "the American Way," especially its mass culture: advertising, televised inanity, automotive fixations, secularism, fragmentation, lack of deference and so on. Profoundly conservative in the old European sense, Kennan was able to identify with a range of remarkably disparate political forces, from Salazar's authoritarian rule in Portugal (and his colonial rule in Africa) to Norwegian social democracy to (briefly) the Stevensonian wing of the Democratic Party in the 1950s to General de Gaulle. Particularism aside (any given approach works where it works), what was common across this peculiar spectrum was Kennan's commitment to order, hierarchy, stability, difference, clarity, expertise, beauty, style and small-scale community. Like many conservatives who deplore the vulgarity and excess of capitalist culture (modern or postmodern), he did not and could not raise the issue of capitalism as such. Confronting questions of economic structure always threatened to turn class into a problem of political power rather than something to be neutralized within an "organic" hierarchy.

As the 1960s faded, however, Kennan found himself oddly at one with a good deal of the surviving left, not least in his fiercely eloquent denunciations of Reagan's resurrection of cold war politics and

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massive expansion of the military in the name of total victory. Even earlier, when he had been chastising with prodigious venom the radical student movement of the 1960s, he did not hesitate to condemn the signature style of US politics in the world: "the hearty bombast, the banging of the chauvinistic bell, the measureless national self-congratulation, the huffy assertions of suspicion and truculence directed to the outside world, and the ritualistic invocation of a pious anticommunism to justify anything for which a more meaningful argument might seem too subtle or too difficult." That he should have ended his century expressing contempt for the hypocrisies of the current officialdom is entirely fitting. ■

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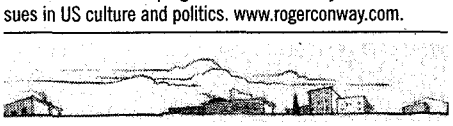

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PUZZLE NO. 2984

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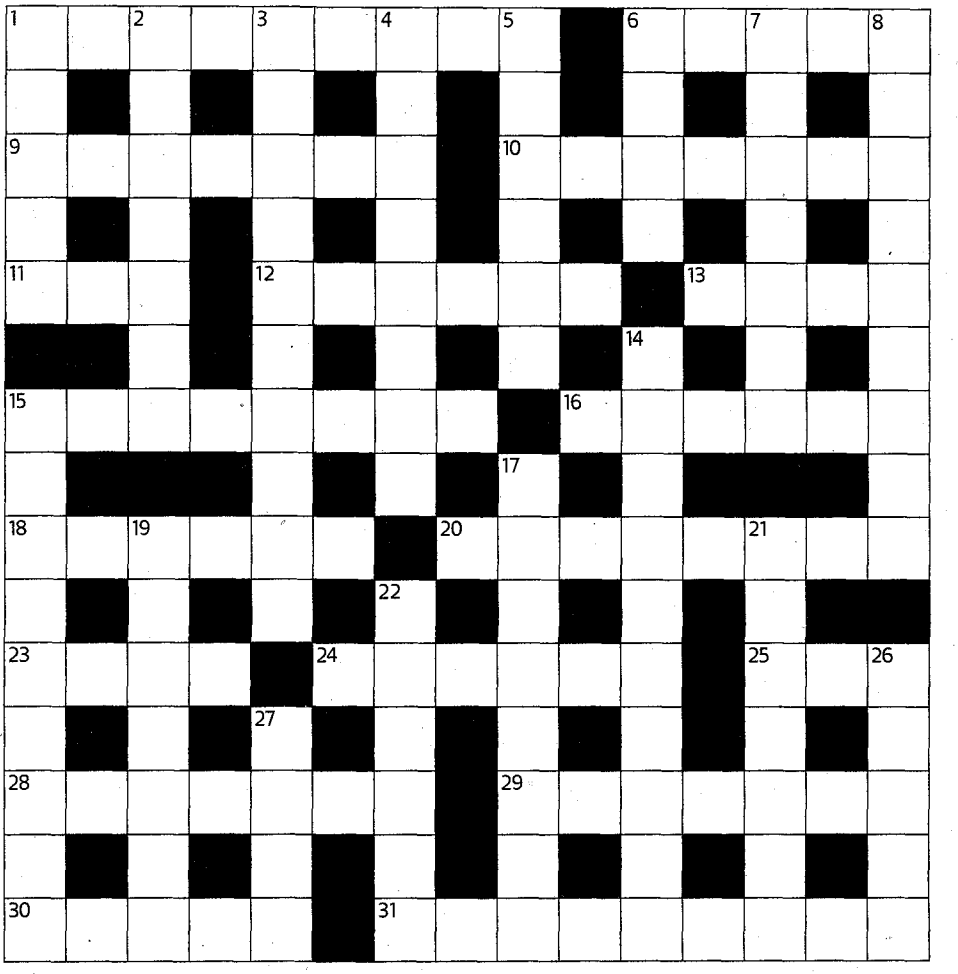

ACROSS

1 Possibly said to need public transportation, but straightens out your misunderstanding of it. (9)

6 Rise to dress? (And go with it to show activity?) (3,2)

9 The wrong men in the continent to show such forgetfulness! (7)

10 One of the Marx Brothers was a good one, though taking his part in an unusual way. (7)

11, 12 and **13** Not just a River Poet, but could be well-known as the Brad of NOVA. (3,4,2,4)

15 One that has to waddle out of the office? (Fancy material to avoid!) (4,4)

16 The girl of a by-gone era supplying a drink—with a big return to the young man of the house. (6)

18 One who takes full possession of the dive? (6)

20 Illegal acts being "not on"—the sense being different. (8)

23 It comes back with a very loud indication of a minor quarrel. (4)

24 Cry that seems to give a sign of disapproval to an unspecified individual—albeit ungrammatically. (3-3)

25 A lot of hair commonly could be cleaner. (3)

28 They aren't the way out, according to what the interloper makes. (7)

29 Made a big hit with the essayist, having long clusters of flowers. (7)

30 and **31** It should cover a lot, many being guaranteed protection by it. (5,9)

DOWN

1 Young men didn't like to be caught in one some time ago, since the atmosphere might be chilly in the first attempts at writing. (5)

2 The total bean production inside might shed some light on the subject. (7)

3 Working groups whose business is not usually their own. (4-6)

4 Fake diamond? (Pat association with the country by it!) (8)

5 and **17** Pod usually appearing where the monsters could be taught—such as Cardiff University, one hears. (6,2,6)

6 Blood spilled by one trying to break into the office? (4)

7 Comparatively thick "lifters"? (7)

8 and **26** Categorized, or taken down a peg by the head of Russia over a Secret Police net? (3,2,4,5)

14 Not the sort that tries to blow up the joint—but one could come right down at you! (4,6)

15 You'll get this in a flash! (9)

17 See 5

19 Gather on coming up with Dante's output. (7)

21 Perhaps pass in the Alps that crazy guy Chaney! (7)

22 "Good for the French!" is a sort of it—but it might be just a plant. (6)

26 See 8

27 Quibble about the catch? (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2983

T	I	M	E	B	O	M	B		S	C	O	T	E	R
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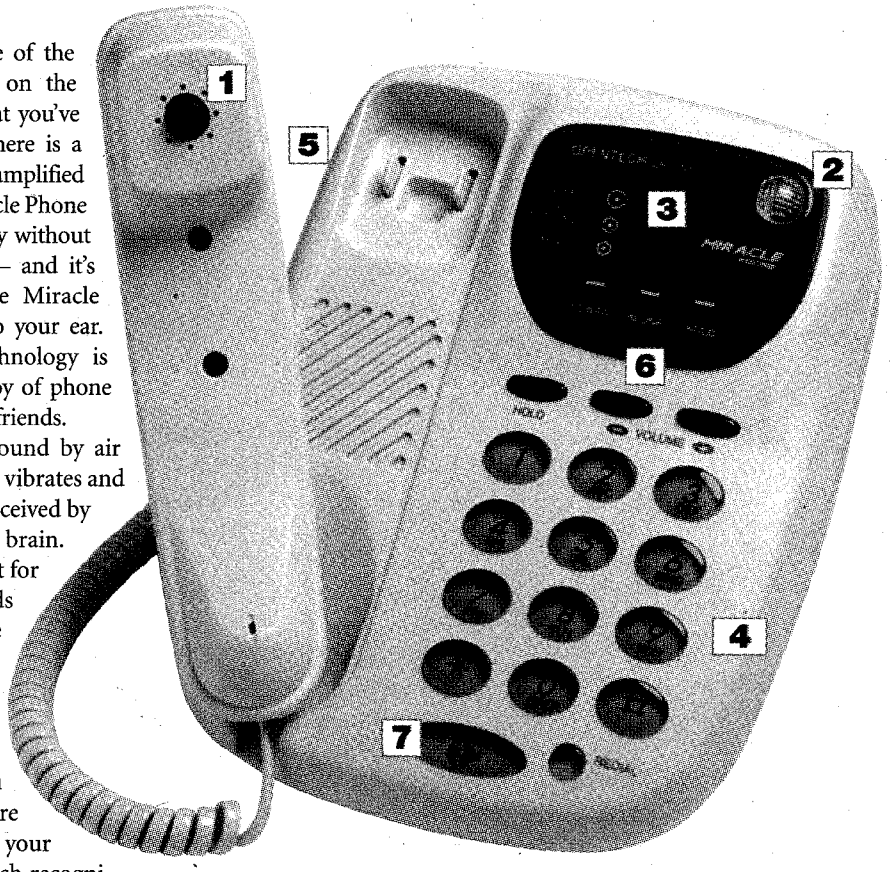

If you have hearing loss, you know that one of the biggest challenges is hearing conversations on the phone. You may have gotten so frustrated that you've stopped using the phone altogether! Now there is a solution: the Miracle Phone. Unlike other amplified phones, which simply amplify sound, the Miracle Phone allows you to hear phone conversations clearly without the feedback, static and background noises – and it's compatible with hearing aids! In fact, the Miracle Phone works best if you don't hold it up to your ear. Sounds strange, right? But this "odd" technology is helping thousands of people rediscover the joy of phone conversations, and reconnect with family and friends.

Use your head. Ordinary phones send sound by air conduction. The small speaker in the earpiece vibrates and sends sound waves through the air. They're received by your ear and interpreted as speech by your brain. For those with normal hearing, that's fine. But for those who are hard of hearing, those words quickly become "lost in translation". The exceptional Miracle Phone works by bone conduction. It sends sound waves via air conduction, but it also sends out sound wave pulsations with its DirectVibe™ Pulsator in the earpiece. You actually feel them when you hold the earpiece against your head – more specifically, against the bone right behind your ear. The sound waves go straight to the speech recognition center in your brain without ever passing through your ear. It's a totally innovative, efficient way to hear phone conversations!

Hearing aids and phones didn't mix... until now! Introducing the Miracle Phone

Loaded with practical features. In addition to its unique technology, the Miracle Phone also has top-of-the-line features that make it a pleasure to use. It has a Visual Ringer that flashes when a call comes in—another handy feature for the hearing impaired. You control the volume of both the ringer and the incoming voice. With its sleek, modern design, it's also easy for those with no hearing loss to use. There's also an indicator that lights up when the line is in use, and its extra-large keypad makes dialing easy.

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The Miracle Phone's patented DirectVibe™ Pulsator transduces sound waves via bone conduction, bypassing the conventional auditory process. By placing the DirectVibe Pulsator at strategic locations on your head, sound vibrations travel from the pulsator to the speech recognition center in your brain.

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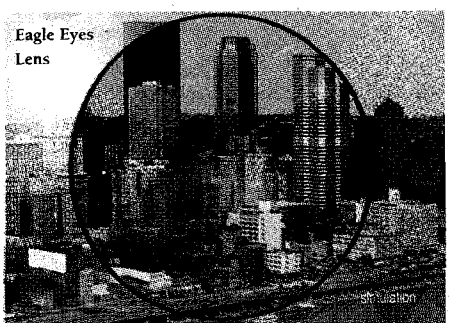
To some, sunglasses are a fashion accessory...

But When Driving, These Sunglasses May Save Your Life!

Driving can expose you to more dangerous glare than any sunny summer day at the beach can...do you know how to protect yourself? An amazing breakthrough in optic technology by NASA called Eagle Eyes® can be your answer. The sun rises and sets at peak travel periods, during the early morning and afternoon rush hours. Many drivers find themselves temporarily blinded as they are driving directly into the glare of the sun. Deadly accidents are regularly caused by such blinding glare. Danger can come from reflected light off of another vehicle, from the pavement, or any other reflective surface. Early morning frost or dew can exacerbate this situation. Salted or snowy road conditions can make matters even worse. Yet, motorists struggle on despite being blinded by the sun's glare and cause countless accidents every year.

Beware of windshield glare!

This glare-induced "blindness" is especially prevalent in the early morning or late in the afternoon, and due to the extremely reflective qualities of other cars. Even your windshield can make matters worse because of small scratches that can increase reflected glare. This powerful glare of the sun can be damaging to the various layers of the eye. Certain road conditions can raise the amount of UV that you are exposed to by up to 85%.



Slip on a pair of Eagle Eyes and everything instantly appears more vivid and sharp. You'll immediately notice that your eyes are more comfortable and relaxed and you'll feel no need to squint. The scientifically designed sunglasses are not just fashion accessories—they are necessary to protect your eyes from those harmful rays produced by the sun in many peak driving times.

> *As a board certified ophthalmologist, I recommend Eagle Eyes to all my patients to protect and enhance their vision!*
>
>
>
> —Dr. Lyda D. Tymiak

NASA's researchers looked to nature for a solution.

Conventional sunglasses can actually blur your vision by allowing harmful UV, blue light rays, and reflective glare in. They can also darken useful, vision-enhancing light rays. At NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory scientists looked to nature for a solution by studying the eyes of eagles, known for their extreme visual acuity. The result of this breakthrough technology is Eagle Eyes®. NASA's researchers studied how eagles can simultaneously distinguish their prey from their surroundings with utmost precision, while protecting their eyes from the daily exposure of harmful high-energy sunlight. These studies led to revolutionary protection for human eyesight.

Patented triple filtering lens system.

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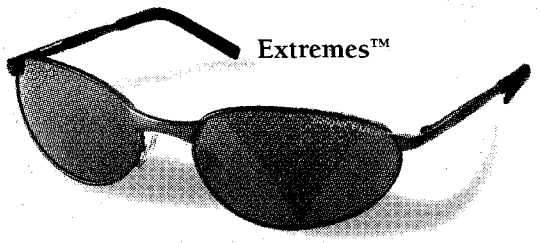

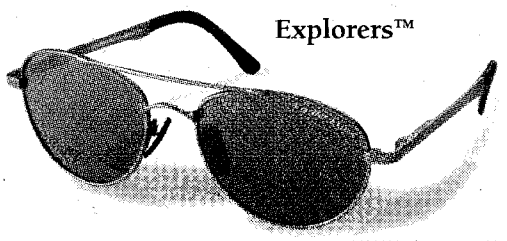

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